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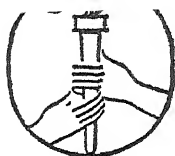
S E M I - C E N T E N N I A L

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“It is pleasant to be even a small author.”

—TCHÉKHOFF





SEMI- CENTENNIAL

*Some of the Life
and Part of the Opinions
of*

LEONARD BACON

Harper & Brothers Publishers

New York and London

1939

Books

By the Same Author

*

BULLINGER BOUND

THE GOOSE ON THE CAPITOL

THE VOYAGE OF AUTOLEON

THE FURIOSO

LOST BUFFALO

DREAM AND ACTION

THE LEGEND OF QUINCIBALD

ANIMULA VAGULA

GUINEA-FOWL

PH.D.'S

*

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To

Martha, Helen, Alice, and their Mother, who do not
Appear Frequently in these Pages for a Reason
Sufficiently Expressed by the Poet Donne.



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SEMI-CENTENNIAL

*The times are whiffing back and forth
And we change with them, lief or loth.
Yet the wild geese are honking north
And the trilliums flare in the undergrowth.*

*And what the poets have said or sung,
However mad, is still half-true.
And though I grow old who once was young,
I stand by that as I used to do.*

*The beard's gone grey in the fiftieth year,
The muscle's flaccid that was so staunch.
If you consider, it would appear
There's a development of paunch.*

*Yet what is so good as my beech-wood,
The silver shaft, and the thin green leaf?
Her beauty that is not understood
Still cleanses mirth and cleanses grief*

*That come by changes. She can heal.
She quickens still with the same power
That blunts the spike of the solomon-seal
And sweetens the arbutus-flower.*

INTRODUCTION

THIS book is the partial and imperfect record of a life in which there has been a great deal of happiness. Many details which might have a certain pungency have been left out, some because they were forgotten, some because they had better be. It is a truism that everyone has plenty to be ashamed of, but quite apart from that I am tired of the convention of exploiting one's obliquities, however profitable, and even more tired of the more satisfactory convention of exploiting the obliquities of others. Deliberately I have refrained from the violation of reserves.

I have tried to set down what I saw or knew and to express my feelings about the seen or the known as exactly and vividly as lay in my power. The matters I have chosen to relate have been selected from a memory, which, like all memories, is as crowded as the rush-hour in a subway, and they were chosen because I hoped they might divert or attract persons who had never heard of me and might perhaps prefer things that way. I speak mainly as a witness and I hope not as the scribes. I have endeavored to be accurate. But memory may be at fault and belief or prejudice still more so. It will be sufficient if I have avoided essential errors.

My life has been governed by proclivity and desire, rather than by what is called thought. But in that respect I resemble the vast majority of what are called thinkers.* They are at liberty, if they choose, to reproach me with a failure to

* "The greater part of conscious thinking must be counted among the instinctive functions." Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*.

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adopt any one of their prevailing philosophies. As if it mattered a great deal, I don't like Fascism and I don't like Marxism either. I think our liberalism is de-alcoholized eau-de-cologne. I think our toryism is weak vinegar extracted from the sourest of grapes. Particularly I am down on what may be called "our crowd" in literature and in politics. The cliquishness of the times is hateful to me. I like people who know that what is worth doing is generally done alone. I have known many of that order. I detest people who conceal individual selfishness by paying it into the pool of a party or a group. I have succeeded in avoiding a great many of them. Clearly it is a reasonable attitude, for even the Dionne children were born as individuals and will die as such. Though co-operation is desirable and necessary between birth and death, obviously people who believe in the mystical virtue of the group are parasites on each other. If I am going to be a parasite, I want a juicy victim who will not devour my heart while I am feasting on his liver. I believe that what counts in the long run is what the single creature thinks and feels as a single creature. Collectivism as a principle of politics may be a good thing for aught I know. As a principle of life, it is abhorrent bunkum. What really matters is the individual's yes or no to such ideas as are supposed to be "in the air." I don't think I have lost sight of this view, while writing this book.

But such a view in no sense contradicts the fact that what interest this work may possess is largely derived from my contact, short or prolonged, with a number of the most vivid personalities of a rich time. I hope they may justify the insolent attempt. I have had the luck to visit, as a tourist if you will, many exciting frontiers. I have known great scientists, great humanists, great statesmen, great poets. I have also known men, uncelebrated except in these pages, every whit as fascinating. From the lot I have chosen, very likely often unwisely, but never without excitement. And I

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regret that I have left out so many, including the noblest of our archaeologists and astronomers and a world-famous British physicist whose golf is worse than mine. But if I pass on a tenth part of the excitement they and others brought into my life, this casual and capricious record of fifty years ought not to be half bad.

It is pleasant and proper to acknowledge the courtesy of Farrar and Rinehart who have permitted me to reprint certain verses from *Rhyme and Punishment*, a little volume of mine published by them.

Certain other debts ought to be acknowledged, in particular to Professor William Tenney Brewster, Mrs. Rush Sturges, Mrs. S. Foster Hunt, Professor Chauncey Brewster Tinker, Mrs. I. Peace Hazard, Mrs. Deborah Calkins, and Mr. Carl Wister, who have read the manuscript and favored me with their suggestions. To them and to my wife, and to my daughter Helen, who went through the same ordeal, I am deeply grateful for comment and encouragement.



SOLVAR

ONE morning I woke and found myself—fifty. Other men have had the same experience. And I dare say it generally makes an impression on them. At any rate it did on me. But such thoughts as occurred to me at the moment would not justify writing a book, unless more adequate motives presented themselves. Rightly or wrongly I believe they did, and to them is owing this record of emphatic failure and minor success that have never lost gust or interest for me.

Practically the first thing I remember is a large black cone which formed a part of my limited horizon and whose outline, etched in my memory, lent an aspect of the familiar to a strange white mountain, whose semblance I first saw many years later in a Japanese print. That dark cone dominated my small world and no Himalaya ever looked higher. Up its side climbed a vast affair of brownish-red metal which, by some strange device, from time to time added many cubits to the stature of the blue-black mountain. For the mountain, unlike the stable rolling hills that hemmed us in, waxed and waned in an arbitrary manner. It was in fact the gigantic coal-pile of the big chemical works, within whose barbed-wire barriers I had very recently been born. For some wholly inexplicable reason the coal-pile was to me a

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more exciting object than volcanic chimneys, than coke-ovens extruding red-hot, eight-foot-high prisms of coal to be slaked, than the cable-railway cars sliding on cobwebs of woven wire a hundred feet above my head. The long, restful, gravitational curve fascinated me then and, in a queer way, in retrospect now.

The works were an odd place in which to be born, but by no means an unexciting place for consciousness to dawn. Freight cars moved out and in from the great main-line tracks a hundred yards from our door, whence I could hear the blare of the limiteds slowing for Syracuse. The phrase "Lake Shore" still has poetry for me, whatever it may have lost for people to whom it never was a symbol of ferocious and enormous power. All around us steam issued in white clouds from unexpected places. Mysterious machines hummed or clanked, and when the blue carbon arcs were switched on at dusk, the roar and pulse never slackened or altered. The white light with the savage blue center is gone from the world, and though its effect was harsh to the point of cruelty, I regret in a manner its cold radiance and lunar-black shadows.

One thing was clear about the works from the first. On Sundays windows were closed in the local shops, but the works never ceased from their impressive continuity. They were evidently too important for such weakness, and if they had entertained the notion, would have whistled their contempt for it from a hundred sirens. I think that even then I recognized that the giants who went up and down between the offices and the ammonia tanks had what may be called an engineering interest in their vocation, that they were at work on the new and the unpredictable, that they were starting something. I have since learned that at the time and the place the investigator cut as much of a figure as the investor. The early nineties were eager and inquiring as well as acquisitive. And I have reason to believe that com-

plexities of "the benzine ring" excited imagination quite as much as the equal mystery of the balance-sheets.

So much for the setting. The characters who moved in it were mainly large and wholly sympathetic creatures who took a very great interest in one. It makes me laugh to think how young my parents were and glad to think how happy they were a stone's throw from a four-way track with chemical dragons fuming and hissing in the front yard. Besides them there were in the house the delightful Maggie, for twenty years "the provider of official meals and unofficial debauches," and Annie a romantic figure with one blue and one brown eye, whose mild rule was accompanied by song ranging from the *Weltschmerz* of the "Kerry Dances" to the aching drama of

Father, dear father, come home with me now.

The clock in the steeple strikes three.

There's poor little Bennie so sick on her arm,

And no one to help her but me.

The latter ballad was suppressed after my mother heard me demanding an encore with streaming tears.

And then of course there was in the house an even smaller person than I, whose existence I regarded with an indifference verging on hostility—my sister two and a half years younger than I, whose arrival on a planet where she instantly encountered my by no means scrupulous competition, I persist in believing that I remember.

A biscuit-toss away from us dwelt my uncle Frederick Hazard with his young wife and two daughters, one exactly my age, the other exactly my sister's. I think I considered their household definitely more interesting than ours, because their cook and her husband, the houseboy, had been slaves, and were still black. I felt no race prejudice at the time. On the contrary "Mammy" was a very good woman indeed, but if hers had been the Devil's kitchen, it could not

have produced a more egregious rascal than Tolliver her husband. Dishonest, shiftless, incapable, for many years he was the delight of the neighborhood. And his remark when justly rebuked for the outrageous abuse of a horse: "When I wukked in de Souf', I wukked for de ve'y fust quality, but when I wukked in de No'f, I wukked for such quality as dey have in de No'f," took the wind out of the sails of the indignant and became a family byword for purposes of denigration.

I have generally considered myself a fortunate man and in nothing more so than in what has been called "the selection of parents." If it were possible to choose and I had been wise in the choice, I could not have done better. I can say with perfect sincerity that I have never known a man of greater interest and variety than my father, and, as the sequel will show, I have a right to form a judgment, for I have known a tremendous number of the most interesting men of my time. My mother was beautiful in her person and still more so in her nature and mind. I mean to say something of both of them.

My father was the eldest son of a marriage between two branches of the Bacon family, known in old New Haven respectively as the "Gown Bacons" and the "Town Bacons." The "Town" Bacons were diligent in business and had at one time been enormously wealthy. Old Jabez, my father's great-grandfather on the "Town" Bacon side, at one time appropriately cornered the New York pork-market by buying a cargo thirty miles at sea, became the richest man in Connecticut, and was reputed to have more in his private fortune than there was in the treasury at Washington. That fortune was dissipated famously by his heirs, and no Bacon, "Town" or "Gown," seems apt to build a Radio City anywhere. The "Gown" Bacons were one and all professional men, the vast majority clergymen. And, if I say it, they were a family of great and highly individual distinction. Leonard

Bacon, one of the last great preachers, who on Lincoln's own word modified the President's views on the slavery question, was a wit and a poet, even if he was called the Pope of Connecticut. His reply to an objector who called out to him: "I don't know about that, Dr. Bacon," is justly remembered: "Then Sir, my knowledge, however small, must outweigh your ignorance, however large." Johnson could not have said more in so few words. His really magnificent hymn, "O God, beneath thy guiding hand," is sung at every Yale commencement to this day. And he had the difficult distinction of presiding (with dignity and credit) at the ecclesiastical trial of Henry Ward Beecher.

But whatever his fame in his own time, it is a farthing light now beside that of his strange sister. A fine enlargement of a good daguerreotype hangs on my stair at Peace Dale, and I never glance at that quiet enthusiastic face without a twinge. For it was Delia Bacon who let loose the hypothesis, as mad as she herself subsequently became, that Francis Bacon wrote the plays of William Shakespeare. The friend of Emerson, of Hawthorne, of Carlyle (it was to her that Hawthorne wrote: "Emerson is something more and something less than a man"), she wore out their patience by her neurotic defense of an indefensible thesis, resting her belief on the utterly false premise that only men of profound learning can possess great literary powers. Anyone who cares may discover in Hawthorne's "Recollections of a Gifted Woman" a story as tragic as any illuminated by the great master, whom she hoped to dethrone in favor of a fictitious pretender. That such powers were to wind up in such a mare's nest is enough to make the gods laugh or weep.

All Leonard Bacon's sons and daughters were brilliant, from Theodore Bacon, in whose house Lord Bryce finished *The American Commonwealth*, and whose biography of his unhappy Aunt Delia is a masterpiece, to the youngest daugh-

ter Alice, whose book *Japanese Girls and Women* is a classic in that department. His second child, my father's father, was a violently controversial clergyman, a writer of power, and a brilliant and agile talker. When he was seventy I saw him charm and fascinate a group of undergraduates, which not every old man can do. And his essay on Calvin entitled "On the Use of Fagots at Geneva" will make any instructed person with a taste for irony laugh as heartily today as when it appeared. But the dragons he smote are extinct now. His wit is lost in a hundred pamphlets on controversies as dead as ours are going to be. But it was from him, no doubt, that my father inherited his almost savage curiosity about everything whatever, and a pronounced tendency to call a spade by its given name.

Tact was not perhaps my father's strongest point, and he had little taste for those pleasures which are obtained by the exercise of what are called social gifts. Not infrequently his immense knowledge had the effect of boring men who knew nothing and wished to know it. And he for his part could not be bothered by such persons and was at small pains to conceal it. He knew many of his own kind to whom he was devoted, and they to him. A pupil of Willard Gibbs, he was an excellent physico-chemist, with an absolute predilection for the advanced and the radical. Gilbert Lewis, one of the most eminent scientists of the times, and one whom no other has called a conservative yet, told me between mirth and astonishment that in my father's sight he, Gilbert, was a hide-bound reactionary lacking in the spirit of intellectual adventure. But my father's interests were not merely scientific. His essays on the Russian national debt in the *Yale Review* begot a whole army of articles in European economic periodicals. He had great knowledge of languages, and fascinating theories about their origins. His discovery that the dimensions of a Saxon Church at Dover, surprisingly fractional in English feet, came out even in Roman,

seems to me not without interest. He translated Cournot's classic application of mathematics to the so-called science of political economy with his brother-in-law, Irving Fisher. He was an authority on Swiss history. He knew whole books of the *Iliad* by heart, and he corresponded frequently and delightfully with such Hellenists as John Hall Scott and Walter Leaf. What region of earth, not full of his labors?

I don't think that it is mere nostalgia of time passed that makes me believe his conversation so excellent. He was a whole Athenaeum in himself. Politics, history, music, Elizabethan drama (he had read it all), Pre-Raphaelite poetry, mathematics (with sidelights on Cardan or Tartaglia), theories of the atom, yarns about old New Haven or his expeditions in Montana before the railway, the California desert, Russia, Central and South America, you never knew what was coming on the carpet. And it was never dull. He was a mass of odd opinion and strange prejudice, but to his son at least an unpredictable and entertaining encyclopedia. And he always behaved as if a child were a rational creature who could be as much interested in thoughts and things as an older person. To that tendency I owe my first recollection of literary history. I have a vignette of him in my mind still, as he stood in the yellow lamplight and told us that the news of Tennyson's death was in the evening paper. It meant something to me for I knew all about Flores in the Azores and Spanish ships at sea. Men so-called have sneered at that name since. No doubt there is much bathos and much sentimentality in Tennyson. Nevertheless the contemporary critics are in error.

His tastes and beliefs were as varied as they were unpredictable. It is hard to understand how he could dislike Keats and at the same time admire William Morris. When Count Witte, whom he visited to discuss the Russian debt, told him that the Moujik was profoundly religious and also profoundly immoral, he thought the statement involved a con-

tradition and that in some way it was a joke on Count Witte. I suppose my father was a puritan for whom it was impossible to separate conduct and belief. But that did not prevent him from telling me stories out of Rabelais. I think, in spite of his enormous and omnivorous reading, that he cared relatively little for literary grace and form. He was apt to admire a book more because it put an end to a controversy or suggested the solution of a problem than because its words were beautiful or the figures in it threw light on human anfractuosity. I know he disliked *Pride and Prejudice*, because, as my mother put it, Mrs. Bennet was a fool whom he could not suffer gladly. Thackeray was his man as against Dickens. Perhaps he remembered his grandfather's epigram in the connection: "I never did like Thackeray, till I read one of his books." Also he held a brief for Macaulay, a writer whose limitations are easy to point out, but whose virtues do not seem recently to have been imitated. Our dinner table was amusing when my father was in the vein, and all the more so because one could never tell, however well one knew his prejudices, on which side of a question he was likely to break out. I wish I might make him appear as fascinating as I found him, when, with the light of battle in his eyes, he clinched an argument with a quotation from Gibbon or adorned his tale with an anecdote about Arrhenius and Vant'hoofd.

If the Bacons were a university family, up to their necks in the learned professions, my mother's family, the Hazards, were an altogether different, but not less entertaining clan. For nearly two hundred and fifty years they have been firmly and fortunately attached to the same land and the signature of the quaint Samuel Sewall stands on the first deed, dated 1698. They were and are physically a big race, who, beginning as the owners of huge autarchic farms, switched thirty years after the Revolution to textile mills, and twenty years after the Civil War to the chemical works which are the

background of my first recollection. If the Bacons are ebullient and outspoken, the Hazards are reserved and carry tact to the point of viciousness. But they have had their notable men and women. "College Tom" Hazard (there were thirty Toms at one time and hence the necessity for nicknames), toward the end of the eighteenth century, was one of the first men to see the economic fallacy implicit in slave labor and was foremost in the passage of the legislation that abolished it in Rhode Island. His grandson, my great-grandfather, Rowland Gibson Hazard the first, must have been an absolutely astounding creature. He lived by two utterly dissimilar patterns. According to the custom of the time he lost three fortunes and made four. Of one of the three lost he was, as I believe, cheated by the ineffable Jay Gould after the manner of Jay Gould, but nothing could rob him of his philosophy. As he traveled the country over on his multifarious enterprises, he wrote huge and elaborate treatises on Freedom of the Will. They were no mere avocational vagaries of a financier, for they led to correspondence with John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, the latter of whom visited him at Peace Dale. There Spencer made to my mother a classic remark. Her grandfather was hot in argument with the Englishman, who after giving a soft answer, turned to the girl of eighteen, as she carved for the old gentlemen, with these words: "But we tend to disquisition. Let us prattle a little." Prattling with Herbert Spencer is what imagination boggles at.

Rowland Gibson Hazard had two remarkable brothers, "Shepherd" Tom, the author of "The Johnny-Cake Papers," an honest-to-God local classic, and Joseph, whom I just remember because of oddity, which even a child could see was incomparable. In him were concentrated, on Mendelian principles, all the queernesses that had at any time come into the family. When you met him crossing the lawns he was followed by dozens of grey squirrels, as an army by vultures.

His tailor made his trousers button at the side like a small boy's, because he had once had the misfortune to appear insufficiently held together on an occasion when such an oversight was more than ordinarily inappropriate. South Kingstown is peppered with memorials of his eccentricity from the hundred-foot stone tower at Narragansett which he built, because he was so commanded in a dream, to the monument over a murdered man whom he did not know, which he constructed for no assignable motive whatever. He was an infatuated spiritualist, but that stood him in good stead, for it made him the warm friend of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who speaks of him with almost hysterical enthusiasm in her letters. Robert Browning he regarded as a hard, selfish man, and his evidence in favor of this astounding position was as bizarre as everything else about him. One outstanding virtue he had. He loved trees as much as the Old Man of Verona, and his place at the Pier became a regular arboretum, which at one time used annually to be visited by scientists from Harvard. But no ornithologist will ever love him, for he appears to have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost. He introduced the English sparrow, and upset the balance of nature.

The Hazards existed in astronomical numbers all over Southern Rhode Island, but there was a sort of crowding of their galaxies together at Peace Dale. There were four big houses full of them, all sizes and ages. A small boy might often find himself hungry at tea-time and balance in his mind the cookies of "Oakwoods" against the little cakes of "Holly House." Oakwoods was my mother's home until we came to live in her own house, the "Acorns."

It is hard for a son to describe his mother. Mine was a tall woman and an authority less suspect than a son's has described her as beautiful. Charlotte Perkins Stetson in her tragic autobiography speaks of my mother as one of the three loveliest creatures she had ever known. I see no reason

to doubt it. Further she had the delightful quality of seeming wholly unaware of it.

She was dark with delicate but strongly marked features and her hands might have been painted by Dürer or carved by Donatello. Her radiant smile had its origin in real humor. And I wish she might have had more matter for mirth. For the warmth of nature that was the essence of her charm made her attract magnetically the burdens of others.

Her mind was finely cultivated. She knew Jane Austen and innumerable poets by heart. And the books she bought with money saved from the household budget would make the core of a first-rate library. She transmitted to me her passion for the Italian painters before Raphael. And I still possess a lovely Madonna by Jacopo di Selayo, which she bought for herself with a gift of money from her grandfather when she was sixteen. And she had the glorious quality of physical courage, a noble attribute, though not so rare as men are apt to think. It was she who went to the heads of a maddened pair of horses thrashing and kicking in the snow, while a strong man I should not like to be stood by and let her do it.

Also she had known and liked and been liked by interesting people, Charlotte Perkins Stetson for instance. John Fiske, the historian, had bellowed German *lieder* in a tremendous bass in the music-room at Oakwoods. And it is a family tradition that twenty years before a power-kite leaped from the sand-dunes at Kitty Hawk, Professor Langley had told a girl of eighteen, under the pines at Aiken, that men were going to fly. One rather more casual encounter of hers throws some little light on a time and a man. As she entered the ball-room at a fancy-dress affair in New Haven, a personage who appeared fat, affected, but not dull, was presented to her. His name was Oscar Wilde and my mother saw with amusement that there were already three Bunthornes on the floor with promise of more to come. Mr.

Wilde must have noticed the same phenomenon, for with an unmoved countenance he remarked: " 'Patience' seems to have been here." Except as an exhibition of sang-froid, this remark has little to recommend it. But we lack sang-froid nowadays. The eighties still had it.

Hers was a delightful humorous mind, little concerned with what seems the main object of women of her opportunities in these times. She wanted her children to know about real things and real people, not about factitious grace or artificial distinction. Beyond what in the nature of things a son owes his mother, I owe her my permanent, early, and intense interest in literature, and specifically in poetry. Long before I could read I had, because of her tutelage, dozens of poems at my tongue's end. My father's fine verbal memory was passed on to me, but she set it to work before I was out of the kilts worn by three-year-olds in the early nineties. Two or three readings ordinarily made me the master of a song of Shakespeare's or Scott's. Nor have I anything but pity for the children of the times, who must be content with abridgments of Mickey Mouse and Buck Rogers, never suspecting wild hunts and faery lands forlorn. That I knew as familiar and desirable friends most of the poems in Miss Repplier's delightful *Book of Famous Verse* before I was six, still seems to me a piece of good fortune not exchangeable with anything, and I am happy at this moment, because my interest and direction were indicated with consummate clearness almost as soon as I was aware that there was a mystery in the world, which one called I. For all the anxiety and bitterness of hope deferred which the practice of the unconquered art has brought me, I count the imperceptible but continuous training that my mother gave me as a capital piece of good luck. What more could one ask than to be introduced as a child by a beautiful woman to divine beauty?

PICTURES AND SCHOOLS

THE narrative of a child's recollections from five to eleven, or for that matter from eleven to eighteen, ought to be immensely detailed or very brief indeed. I prefer the second alternative. What I retain is a series of vivid "camera shots" that remain in the mind like actual photographs on the wall of a room. The pied woods at Peace Dale and the blue and rose-stone heights of Santa Barbara are apt to be the background of the earlier vignettes, indefinite perhaps, but as necessary to the picture as the beautiful dim perspectives of Perugino and Botticelli. The dangerous-looking black water where I began my first clumsy operations against the embattled perch and secret pickerel. The boy at the public school, who first drawing a line on the ground invited me to toe it, and, when with obliging politeness I complied with the request, delivered a crashing punch to my jaw. That was my first and unhappily not my last encounter with human pleasure in cruelty for its own sake. There was that dog on top of its kennel barking furiously as the train ploughed axle-deep through the flooded streets of what must have been St. Louis. A prairie-dog metropolis seen from the same train under the brilliant sun of the great plains. The road-runner which I encountered head-on in the knee-high

myrtle under the orange trees at Mission Hill, nor is it known which was more horrified, boy or bird. The silver bridle and pommel of Dixie Thompson, last of the rancheros, as he pulled up on State Street in Santa Barbara to bow to my grandmother. The moment when in Madame Montessori's phrase I "exploded into reading." That is unusually sharply defined. The day before a book was as closely sealed to me as if I had been blind. And in the twinkling of an eye, a page in Andrew Lang's *Blue True Story Book*, on which I was idly examining a picture, was illuminated as if by a lightning flash. The yells of men in front of the *Santa Barbara Press* building when war was declared against Spain. The strange impression made on me by the only good American ballad:

*"Out booms! out booms!" our skipper called.
 "Out booms! and give her sheet!"*

and the halting and crude imitation of it that almost immediately and half-automatically came out of the end of my own pencil. "The King's Ankus" in *St. Nicholas*, and the unimagined horror and interest that made me look around like one that knew the fearful fiend was treading close behind him. A redstart at his ease in the young South County beechwood. The insane speed of a special train that "stopped only for hot-boxes" between California and Omaha. Wild flowers at Saugus in the desert, Indian paint-brush and bachelor's button. "Fantastical rock-towers" over Green River, most unbelievable railway division-point on earth. My uncles playing tennis in the soft Rhode Island summer evening, while the shadows of maple and sycamore grew longer and blacker across the sweet hay. Panchita Dibblee's beautiful face and ivory hands as she sat cutting confetti at the carnival. These are but a few of the details in the jumble. But I observe a sort of unity. The things that pleased, excited, or alarmed me then, would, *mutatis mutandis*, have

the same effect now, and actually do, nor am I ashamed in any respect of what attracted my childish attention. This is just as well, for I am fully aware of the connection for good or evil between these things and what I was to become.

Up to my eleventh year I don't suppose there was a happier child on the planet than I. But I must have become a problem in some way, for the higher powers decided at that point that I ought to go to boarding-school, and St. George's at Newport, then a tiny struggling affair with not more than twenty-four boarders, was my destined fate. I think now that I was too young to go, but at all events I went. The earlier part of my experience there was not unlike Baal! Baal! Black Sheep's. Like him, from the throne of domestic tyranny, where, I fear, I had exhibited some of the qualities of Nero (this I fancy was the problem), I found myself reduced to the lowest rank of the insulted and the injured. And whatever sympathy I may have for the maladjusted and unhappy, I derive from the first five years of my seven at what in time became one of the best schools in America.

Even now I don't like to consider certain aspects of that minor martyrdom. Rightly or wrongly there was no taste, interest, or opinion which I shared with my schoolmates. And as a result, for years there was hardly one of them whom I could feel was my friend. Too tall for my strength, I was a figure of fun, a set-up, a push-over, in the sight of a generation of athletes. Too one-sided in my tastes, the nearest thing to an intellectual found me almost as grotesque in more abstract matters. And certainly during my first two years it would be hard for me to say by whom I was more persecuted, whether by my compeers or by the harassed young Harvard men who were endeavoring to get me over the hurdles of Latin grammar and through the briars of elementary algebra. Like Black Sheep I grew clumsy and stupid in my own sight, and, though I am by nature so social as to be a byword, was driven almost by force into

the strict retirement of an interior life. This grew upon me to such an extent that I actually dreaded encountering a couple of comrades on my solitary walks. And it was five years before I could get off at Wickford Junction, when vacation was over, without fear of the *peine forte et dure*. On the railway platform there I was sure to meet five or six young demons, brimming with confidence, and, as I too well knew, avidly eager to make me the object of their wit or their cruelty. It is a fact that I encountered the latter in a big way. At the school my first year was a boy, better a young man nearly grown, whose record of expulsions from other schools was no trifle. We roomed together, and in secret, for fun, he beat me with a belt. He was past all peradventure a sadist. And the strange intent look on his face, which somehow added to my agony as the lash fell, was, as I now perceive, due to perverted sexuality. Anyhow such were his *menus plaisirs*, which he knew perfectly well the code would not permit me to betray. I have never known a more breathless sense of relief than when the news went round the school that my disciple of the great Marquis, who was vastly popular, had been expelled for criminality more venial but which had the advantage of being easily detected.

Another instance may be adduced as an anticlimax. For our sins at about the same time the school was doing its best to educate the fat, stupid, hypothyroid scion of one of those distinguished Boston families, whose function it seems to be to produce such creatures. He weighed two hundred pounds and was backward physically and mentally. It was probably his sense of his own limitations that made him believe that inflicting pain on smaller boys would give him a much-needed feeling of superiority. At any rate for a week he knocked about a couple of small boys, of whom I was one, with much pleasure and complete impunity. In the fag-end of a winter afternoon he was indulging in these amiable diversions when the lightning struck. Upon him descended

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Frank Howland, the school's best athlete, as he was also the best scholar that was ever graduated from the school, and, I suppose, the last half-back in America who read Homer in the original for pleasure on his way to battles where he ruled the whirlwind. His experienced eye took in the situation. With a panther-snarl such as Bagheera might have uttered on discovering a couple of Mowglis being chivied by a hyena, he seized that Bostonian lurdan by his yellow football crop and swung him before the eyes of his victims in ghastly but satisfactory arcs to and fro all round the room. The transition for the poor creature from cruel triumph to the essence of humiliating defeat was as sudden and appalling as anything I ever witnessed. Bajazet in the cage of Tamburlaine might keep some sorry shadow of dignity or defiance, but not so that howling slave. The glorious thing about the treatment was that it took magnificently. Never again to my knowledge did that bearer of a mighty name lift a finger against the least of God's creatures. And some years later when, a splendiferous Harvard senior, he visited the school, I was aware of some faint discomfort he still seemed to feel in my presence, because I knew what I knew.

Against these difficulties and others there was always one overwhelming reason for being at the school at all. The headmaster John Byron Diman was and is a remarkable figure in American education. Only last year the boys of the Protestant School he founded and built up sent him seventy-five roses on his seventy-fifth birthday, which he passed in the Roman Catholic School which he likewise founded and built up. I loved him then and I love him now, and every alumnus of either school feels exactly as I do. He was the incarnation of humorous justice and sagacious authority. And in addition he was an instinctive expert in the difficult study of personality. Not a great teacher himself in the sense that he could expose a subject in an imaginative or

charming manner, he nevertheless understood, far better than many a teacher who can, that teaching is the art of encouragement. For some years almost single-handed he counteracted the evils in my path. My little poems he made me feel were worth hammering at, when they were the laughing-stock of my equals and a subject of not too elegant irony among my teachers. And once when I was practically in Coventry with my mates and had achieved what was then the all-time high in that form of penalty which eliminated holidays, he wiped the slate clean and sent me forth free. I am happy to say that after this act of mercy I began almost immediately to be virtuous with respect to minor regulations, that my work picked up, and that a faint dawn gleamed.

For the picture ought not to be made too black. Of course there were cakes and ale as well as kicks. There were picnics up the island to the ruined gardens of Vaucuse where the unclipped box stood eight feet high. There were long lazy afternoons in fastnesses discovered among the crags where Bishop Berkeley wrote *Alciphron*. There were little dances in Greenough Place where I encountered creatures of my own age, whose ideas did not seem to involve making me appear ridiculous. But it was not until my fifth-form year that I began to feel that I was not created as a source of innocent merriment for the inexplicably cruel. In spite of a prize or two for stories and poems, which on the whole increased my reputation for being eccentric and antisocial, I began to feel my oats a little. The narrow world into which I had retreated opened up, if ever so slightly. I began to have a friend or two. And before long I could face a group of my competitors without feeling like a tame hare in the presence of a pack of wild cats.

I have often wondered about my troubles at this time, and why I was so defenseless. I have no valid explanation. It is easy to say that I was just a horrid, self-centered little boy,

whose corners were in process of being knocked off. It is equally easy to say that I was a rather nice little boy who got no sympathy from his companions with respect to his legitimate tastes. I have never understood why an interest in electricity or locomotives was all right with the mob, whereas a bent for literature or music was clear evidence that one was a social outcast. It was certainly true as far as I was concerned. And other men with whom I have talked have reported the same experience. Richard Aldington, for instance, ran a perpetual gauntlet at his school in England. Perhaps it is necessary and inescapable like blistering your hands at a sport you enjoy. But at any rate without instituting comparisons between myself and better men who doubtless endured more, I knew before I was eighteen quite as much about collective cruelty as it was necessary to know. And I have no doubt that the morbid individualism of a dozen writers I could name can be attributed to their reaction against the minor persecution they suffered in childhood, because of wholly innocent deviations from collective standards. Nor is it to be wondered at that such men are invariably liberals of the most embittered description.

Whatever the value of these observations, in spite of the bitterness I felt and in a way still feel, I had in those years a sort of flowering time, like an inconspicuous plant that puts forth small petals under fallen leaves. I found delightful books in the school library, *Henry Esmond*, the never sufficiently praised *Ingoldsby Legends*, of all things an abridgment of Gibbon. A remarkable work called *The Flight of a Tartar Tribe* developed in me a permanent and almost insane curiosity about the Far East which was to bear a form of fruit (some people would say crab-apples) twenty years later. I have never been able to forget the final wholly un-historical episode when the genius of De Quincey conjured up the ghastly spectacle of Tartar and Bashkir, alike dying of thirst, yet carrying on their death-struggle in the bloody

water on the rim of the desert, while the artillery of the Emperor K'ien-Lung opened fire on the height. Browning made me drunk in a new manner, as he made McTurk in *Stalky and Co.* What a capital discovery that twenty-five cent Macmillan school edition turned out to be, all full of glass masks and slughorns. Kipling I knew almost by heart, and it was a red-letter day when I bought *The Five Nations* hot and hot, with the hoarded allowance of five weeks. Another find, purchased on equally hard terms, was a volume of *The Bibelot* which contained William Morris' "Hollow Land," Stevenson's "Father Damien," and an intelligent selection of the poems of John Donne, not to mention Henry King's "Exequy." I am happy to think that "Then let us melt and make no noise" came home to my business and bosom, as it should have done and that I was already aware that not much magic is more magical than

*"Stay for me there. I shall not fail
To meet thee in that hollow vale."*

Poe was another active chemical. And I know that, as I looked across a little bay at the mist-softened McKim, Meade and White Touraine Castles on the Newport Cliffs, that the "City in the Sea" was in my mind, the more beautiful by contrast. Whitman, Emerson, a hundred others I did not know. And one thing is grievous to me still, for I turned the pages of a book, in which at the time my ignorant eyes saw nothing. Twenty years later it became to me, what it still is, a sort of secular Bible. But one is ashamed even of childish stupidity. Obsessed by the romantic and the picturesque, I utterly failed to see the naked beauty of *The Natural History of Selborne*.

The failure is all the worse because that book should have been right up the alley of a boy who was eaten up by the glory of the environment. The white beaches, the huge curve of ocean to the south, the savin-darkened glens of

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Paradise, the irrational cleft of Purgatory, in some way upon those things I fed. I can see in the cramped, awkward and imitative little poems that I wrote in defiance of popular hostility some faint connection with what I felt about inescapable beauty around. Winter suns getting up over Gay Head or going down behind the long combination of Monte Carlo and Cranford, otherwise called Newport, a mile of white water under the equinox, ospreys beating despairing wings about their ravished nest, the Poe-Doré perspectives of Vaucluse, pudding-stone and laurel, I possess these things. Nor am I ashamed.

There was one vivid and prolonged interruption of my studies. At the end of my first miserable year at school we went abroad for six months. My father was by this time a sort of liaison-officer between the American company and its European parent. He had to cross practically every year and this time took us all with him. It was worth while in those days to come into the mouth of the British channel, where the tall square-riggers literally crowded the waters. It looked like old prints of a sea fight without the smoke. And I don't suppose anyone realized that in half a generation those great and beautiful things would be swept from every sea.

We slid up the Scheldt to Antwerp and life at once became a study in the kaleidoscopic. Brussels, Paris, Geneva, London were a salmagundi in the brain. Pictures, people, places, excited and perplexed. I did not understand my mother's natural horror when she discovered that my sister and I had paid an unlicensed, though supervised, visit to the Musée Wiertz, where we had examined with interest the Belgian maniac's picture of Napoleon in hell and the notably realistic "Last Second of a Suicide." I think she was better pleased when that remarkable and simple gentleman Ernest Solvay showed me the fifteen-foot Iguanodons he had caused to be set up in the natural history museum. They

made as great an impression as Wiertz and a distinctly less sadistic one. Paris was merely a complex of noise and dirt that it took me years to get over. But the Eiffel Tower gave me my first inkling of what it is not to have a head for a height, a horror that no effort of the will has enabled me to overcome. The memories crowd, but two I select. I am glad I walked over the Col de Balme with my father and saw the black flanks of the Dent d'Argentiere dripping and glistening from the melting snow. And I have never forgotten a crystalline day, when, from a summit in the Jura behind Lausanne, I saw the Lake of Geneva at my feet with the windows of tiny cities glittering in the sun, and beyond the forty-mile-long cobalt crescent the whole wall of the Alps unflecked by a cloud. On such a day one may see from the Dôle, the Chamouni range, the Monte Rosa, the Matterhorn, and the Bernese Oberland. All that I beheld. I am not fool enough to attempt description. Salvation may be hoped in vain from the multitude of mountains, but even small boys may get something from such a sight.

A little travel in Switzerland was followed by a half-term at the Cantonal school of Petit Saconnex, where I acquired that inaccurate facility in the French tongue for which I am celebrated. The experience was not unpleasant, even if I did discover small boys whose natural method of defense was scratching. Also for a wonder I was the physical cock of the walk and perhaps threw my weight about a little. Like my father before me I grew fond of the Swiss, who still seem to me one of the most interesting peoples in Europe. Stolid hotel-keepers they may appear to the not too brilliant tourist, but I know no country where so great a proportion of the people get such a kick out of life. And even as a child I recognized their pleasant humor and their natural kindness, which I have found alike in peasant and in aristocrat. Later on, as a man, it seemed to me not unnatural that in my lifetime a population no larger than Chicago's should

have produced a world-painter, a world-poet, and one of the two great psychologists of the times.

A tiny encounter may be mentioned because it links times not ordinarily thought of as capable of contact. My father took me to call on a former teacher of his at the Collège de Genève, where he had prepared for Yale. The professor not only appeared unspeakably old, but really was, for he remembered how the news of Waterloo had been whispered in his father's dining-room in some Burgundian village. The family were royalists and dreaded Bonapartist riots as a result of the disaster. Also he had talked with Alexander von Humboldt, which sounds almost as far back as Archimedes. There is some queer pleasure for me at least in having seen a man who could have heard the drums of the Grande Armée.

The Swiss interlude came to an end, and we headed for home by way of London in an exciting time. The great Queen was still on the throne. But I was not aware of impending change as I watched a performance of *Pinafore* with the original Dick Dead-Eye and the original Little Buttercup at the Savoy. *Ruddigore* would have been more appropriate, for that delightful piece contains Gilbert's horn-pipe epitaph on the Victorians:

*Duty! Duty must be done.
This rule applies to everyone.*

And it was high time to think of epitaphs. The rampant imperialism of a Chamberlain quite unlike either of his sons was expressed in the huge exposition at Earls court, where my fancy was much tickled by a fountain of mercury with lumps of iron bobbing on the surface of the liquid metal, and still more by a fantasia called "Savage South Africa." Buffalo Bill was tame and trifling when compared with authentic Zulus armed with genuine assegais and knobkerries and yelling like all Rider Haggard, as they were

beaten off by heroic Colonials who only had machine-guns. A few days later, I heard the newsboys screaming "Lady-smith besieged!" A small boy did not notice any more than a responsible statesman that the stable system of things had cracks in the façade. But it was clear that South Africa had gone definitely savage.

We spent a few days at Gloucester with my father's remarkable friend John Bellows, the author of the extraordinary little French Dictionary, the perfect model of what such a book should be. He had not only written the book, but he had printed and bound the first copies with his own hands. I still think of that quaint Quaker with real admiration. He was awfully close to being a great man, from which his eccentricities of thought and conduct in no way detracted. Curiously enough for a Quaker he had a passion for Gothic architecture, but when he took us to Gloucester Cathedral, he remained outside, because he would not remove his hat in a building built with hands and he would not give offense by going in with it on. He, it was, who first pointed out to me that nouns and verbs excel adjectives when it comes to making an idea tell.

John Bellows (it was difficult for a small boy to call him John, which one had to do because his creed forbade the use of honorifics) had played one curious rôle in modern literary history. He had got interested in the Doukhobors, who bear a faint Slavic resemblance to the Quakers, and who were being seriously oppressed by the Russian government, because they refused to serve in the army. Not only that, but he enlisted the services of Count Tolstoi in raising money to transport the unhappy creatures to Canada. Tolstoi had long since given up literature as a vanity of this world. But at Bellows' insistence and for a good cause, he took up his pen and wrote *Resurrection*, which I believe was simultaneously published in six languages. The Doukhobors' tickets were easily purchased with the proceeds, but the horror of

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John Bellows, when he read the wholly immoral work which he had persuaded Tolstoi to write, was only equaled by the bewilderment of Tolstoi when he found that Bellows was horrified. The whole correspondence, conducted on both sides in a spirit of superb forbearance, is worth reading for the spectacle it presents of two fine creatures utterly and entirely unable to understand each other.

We sailed from war-intoxicated England on a six-thousand-ton freighter into the worst storm I have ever seen at sea. For four or five days racks were on the tables and trunks shot from side to side of staterooms. Then the sea became glass and I saw the wonders of the deep. With a passenger-list of thirteen, a boy had the run of the ship. I had wandered into the very bows under the jack-staff and was staring at the obsidian-black water, when it happened. With a magnificent leap a porpoise sprang out of the sea within ten feet of me, followed by four or five others. I could have touched their shining backs with a billiard-cue, and no tongue their beauty might declare. The huge creatures were the very spirit of all gay triumphant life. I don't know how long they played at the bows of the *Cestrian*, but when they vanished as suddenly as they came, I was like a man bereaved. The tyrant of Syracuse who stamped their beautiful free images on his coins must have been a better man than his treatment of Plato would indicate.

A week later I took the hateful journey to Newport and the gates of learning shut with a clang.

If I had a miserable time at school during those years, no one had a pleasanter one during the long vacations. My father had spent splendid holidays twenty years before on a lake in central New Hampshire, and in 1900 he bought a cottage on a hill overlooking the scene of his pleasures. There we spent many summers and I became a boy of black bass and acquainted with pickerel. At one time I must have known every inch of Lake Asquam. I early got the habit of

getting up long before dawn and rowing four or five miles up the lake to a favorite hole. Why favorite holes are never less than five miles away remains an enigma. Often the equally mad came as far to fish at a reef a stone's throw from our boathouse, where I would have scorned to drop a line. From the silvery dawns when I went down the trail past the basswood clump, past the big pine, past the dew-soaked mooseberries, to come out on the lake, "pallid as a fish's belly," with nothing to indicate day except a green phosphorescence over Red Hill, I am certain I derived a sense of the connection of things, that under no circumstances would I give up. A cold feeling in the stomach, three to five miles hard rowing, the clank of oar-locks, the gaunt arms of a pine against salmon-rose cloud, the anchor thudding under, with bubbles rising from the white manila hairs of the rope, and "a solemn settling down to devour breakfast," such things are hard to be spoken and convey little to the uninitiated, who are apt to wonder what value they possess in comparison with the "womb-like warmth of a good bed." I personally believe that they have something to do with a species of rebirth, which to resign would be like giving up existence itself. A sort of not-being is avoided by such expeditions—the not-being which results from continual association with so many people that one cannot know them, the curse of the times. Accordingly a blank day with respect to capture was hardly a penalty. The passage of a heron on slow-beating wing, the sheldrake caught asleep, the mink moving snakily in the water six feet over-side, more than indemnified one for the jests of the ignorant. And to this day images which I acquired then appear, however inadequately, in my verses. A branch of pepperidge as scarlet in August as maple in October, the "Brocken-spectre" of a pine enlarged beyond any sequoia on the translucent screen of mist, the leap of a gallant three-pounder that got gloriously away, and the driving anger of a sixty-mile squall engendered out of the moun-

tains' understandable contempt, remain with me as a sort of wealth, as the commonplace puts it, not taxable by any method yet devised by Mr. Morgenthau. To that extent I am glad, like a better poet, that I am a cold and calculating profiteer.

From such delights I returned annually to a school that grew easier against the pull of the collar. I began to see the good and the gain of it, to perceive that many things were very good indeed, for all my earlier unhappiness. I think the curriculum left something to be desired. Things were left out that might well have been taught. A good deal was taught that might well have been left out. But masters whom I had come to know and like sent me to Yale with the Latin and Greek verbs reasonably intact and in my possession. And I have not yet learned to believe that the standard of personal conduct they set up, however I may have failed to abide by it, was merely the resultant of conflicting nineteenth-century hypocrisies. The place was certainly more up and coming than the English schools of the period (with the possible exception of Oundle), for we must, I suppose, believe Professor Joad, who boasts in his memoirs that about my time he got into Oxford without ever having heard of Darwin. We had not, it is true, arrived as yet at the modern conveniences of the class-struggle, *gestalt-psychologie*, and scientific pedagogy. But I myself had seen the submicroscopic volcano of the spinthariscopes, and some of us were aware of innovations in the sciences, not to mention the arts. Anyhow as the first automobiles began to snort more confidently at terrified horses, and the first aeroplane frightened the gulls of Kitty Hawk, the hardest phase of my education came to an end that caused me actual grief.

❧ III ❧

YALE—1

AS FAR as anything can be foreordained it was foreordained that I should go to Yale. My father was graduated in 1879, his father was graduated in 1849, and his father in 1820. The uncles and cousins were a multitude, like which the populous North poured never from her frozen loins. There were only five of them on the faculty when I entered in 1905. And to have considered another university was as unthinkable for me as the hypothesis that Marx might be in error somewhere would be for Earl Browder. Many a young man of these succeeding times has reasoned in a wholly different manner, desiring the mere adventure of entering a region unknown, not to mention avoiding the handicap of a binding tradition. But the modern convention of sniping at old ones was still in the womb of a later decade when I went up for my examinations. And I am happy that in this instance I followed the track beaten by twenty or more of my house.

My first contact with the university was extraordinarily agreeable. In queer old sham-Gothic Alumni Hall at the end of a soft June afternoon, I laid my blue examination book on a pile before an old gentleman who had the beard and air of Capitolian Jupiter. He glanced at my name on the

book and turning with a godlike smile said to me: "It's good to see them coming back." What kinder word could have been said to a timid sub-Freshman? Fifty yards away in space and thirty-two years removed in time, I saw the son of that old gentleman elevated to the purple of the University Presidency. I hope that on that occasion somebody said something to Charles Seymour that touched him as much as his father's remark touched me.

Freshman year began for me under good auspices. Everything had a blaze of glamour and interest. The very weather seemed lovelier than what one had experienced. And for boys who had known the discipline and regularity of church-schools there was a sense of Wordsworthian liberty in the air. There was novelty in the approach even to subjects not unfamiliar. But, with the exception of English and German, I think we were not particularly well taught, or rather that the conception of teaching was poor. Boys who had had five to seven years of Latin were kept nibbling like mice at a rind of Livy or a crust of Tacitus. If our interest were not to die in a waste of ablative absolutes and pregnant constructions, they should have rushed us through great landscapes of Roman poetry rapidly, without too much attention to whether or no we had noticed a partitive genitive. It was the pupil's sense of never finishing anything, of never getting outside of an author, the feeling that only half the *Aeneid* needed to be read, thank God! which killed curiosity about writers who never can die. Dwelling for a month on ten pages of a work like the *Germania* will make you weary of its rhetorical and grammatical botany. But Latin was being made easy for us—and, in proportion to the ease, dull. All I remember of that course is that the instructor was a thoroughly agreeable and sympathetic man, whose heroic efforts to connect a great language and literature with contemporary interests were beyond description futile, and must have been, given the system that prevailed. Greek was

a little better. Here again I liked the teacher, but what kind of a meal is half a dialogue of Plato, a few juicy bits of Herodotus and, horrible to state, *excerpts* from Homer who should be read entire if at all? To geld that stallion is an insult to God. And it was well within our powers to have read the *Iliad* through in a year, and to have known something, including a sense of achievement. French was a trifle, even more implacably designed for the benefit of the intellectually under-privileged. One could do it with the left hand or not at all. It made no difference. From the German course I actually derived something. And by that I do not mean anything like even a working knowledge of that difficult tongue. But I learned enough to see how beautiful the lyrical poetry was, which was and is clear gain. As if to make up for these relatively disappointing experiences of advanced education, Freshman English was wildly exciting. Here at least one was not fobbed off with specimens soaked in academic formaldehyde, or with condensations for the feeble-minded. One read whole books and entire poems. The repertory of honorable pleasure was added to. And though the expansion of the horizon might not be so enormous as one believed, when Byron swam into one's ken, at least it was not being pedantically narrowed. Though I am personally strongly opposed to the proliferation of English departments in the universities of this republic, I owe a great deal to that particular course and to the human sympathy of the not too successful man who conducted it.

At this point I might just as well get rid of some general remarks on the subject of Yale, which, partly through its own fault, is the most misunderstood university in the country. Whatever nine out of ten of the alumni of other institutions may have to say, Yale is not a gladiatorial school, with a more than enviable record of triumph in the amphitheater. The impression is widespread and certain graduates of the university are largely to blame, a generation not

of vipers but of bankers and brokers. Everyone knows the type, which is by no means a specifically Yale product. Harvard and Princeton turn out quantities of the same sort of animal every commencement. Whatever their provenience they have, as has been noticed before, the same marks, the same look of self-satisfaction, the same well-cut clothes with the ties just a trifle on the loud side, very generally the strange distinction of never having been players themselves, and the still stranger one of having lost every trace of the cultivation, with which in their time they had been threatened, except that they once saw Hinkey plain and drank vicarious delight of battle with heroes of "the Hefflefingered dawn." It is unpleasant to think that such persons are unaware, and glad to be unaware, of the existence of the Yale of Silliman, of Marsh, of William Dwight Whitney, of William Graham Sumner, of Willard Gibbs, the last of whom they may actually have pushed off the sidewalk during the hullabaloo of the great annual games.

Gibbs was still alive when my class entered. But I doubt if there were ten men in it who knew that the greatest scientist born in the Western hemisphere walked among us, as we pursued our important affairs. I knew he existed, because of my father's anecdote about the models of Gibbs' mathematical surfaces in the great man's office. My father was something of a tease and he knew Gibbs was modest to a fault. "Professor Gibbs," he said, "who made those models?" Gibbs in great confusion refused to tell him. As my father knew, the models had been made by Clerk-Maxwell with his own hands, and sent as a present to the only American of the nineteenth century whose name is likely to outlast Lincoln's. In the great Yankee phrase anything that tends to make youth oblivious of a man like that ought to be stopped.

In spite of the ruling passion which was part of the cause of that obliviousness, and in the teeth of my strictures on

the courses of Freshman year, the university was a most enlightening place. There were plenty of teachers who absolutely opened the mind. In fact I only had two courses which I should describe as inadequate after the first year. One in French was conducted by an unhappy creature who had been highly recommended to Yale by the President of Harvard, after the manner of C. W. Eliot, when he wished to get rid of an undesirable. The other was in the History of the Lower Empire, and I could have managed it better myself. But these were exceptional. Judd in psychology, however given to nineteenth-century materialism, made anatomy and physiology, as prolegomena to his subject, come alive, and delivered us to speculations beyond our strength, always a fine thing. Kreider in physics was the best teacher I ever saw, an ideal come true. A gang of seniors with hangovers and otherwise not prepared for intellectual debate, grew wild with excitement as that blond Mephistopheles, with a mixture of irony and enthusiasm, drew from unwilling lips, faltering admissions that with dramatic suddenness elucidated the hitherto wholly boring behavior of the atom. I never knew a man who came so near to the Platonic ideal of the Socratic method. To give any idea of him I must parody a friend's parody: "By the Dog! Charmides, did you not tell me but a minute ago, that at absolute zero there is, and can be, no motion of any kind?" I am not unmindful of my good fortune in having heard a master play.

Ellsworth Huntington, I am certain, hated lecturing (in which after thirteen chequered years of it, I can heartily sympathize with him), but nevertheless he stays in my mind as someone momentous. The ideas derived from the study of geography and climate that seemed to hover around him rather than to come from him, may have been applied to history with premature enthusiasm. But certainly there was excitement in them. And I cannot escape the belief that,

however he may have been wrong in detail, the hypotheses he worked on corresponded with the facts in the large. Also it was something to a boy who had never been ten miles from a highway, to visit Asia in thought, with a man who had sat down in the middle of the Gobi Desert to write up his diary, after the stampede of camels, whose more than probable failure to return would make the continuation of that diary wholly impossible.

A favorite indoor sport of the soi-disant intellectuals, that dubious race who live by their brains and have no brains, has been the hurling of reasonably clumsy darts at William Lyon Phelps. With many of his spoken words and his written pronouncements, I myself could not possibly agree, and I dare say he might not subsequently himself. Enthusiasm is his *métier* and enthusiasm is the mother of contradiction. When he says that *Cyrano de Bergerac* is the greatest play since Shakespeare, or that *Tristram Shandy* is a dull book, all he means is that he has been burnt up by the fire of Rostand, which emphatically exists, and disgusted by the grossness of Sterne, who can be gross as hell. Neither of these remarks happens to coincide with my opinions, but I infinitely prefer his exaggerated over-statement of genuine feeling to the well-weighed, cautious, non-committal utterance of persons who have not hesitated to criticize him, not without bitterness. However he may have been blamed for what after all is mere rhetoric, the literary resurgence at New Haven, which began in the nineties and continues to this hour, is due at least in part to his personal—I said personal—efforts. For forty years there was no undergraduate with literary ambitions, on whose immature flowers the healing waters of Phelps's kindness did not fall. Sinclair Lewis and Stephen Benét knew it well. He would walk half across the campus to tell you that he liked something you had written in the *Lit* or the *Courant*. And he knew perfectly well that there were no better composition courses.

It is for such reasons I believe that the ineptitude of persons who pillory his occasionally hasty remarks is about equal to their malignity. Phelps had a function which he performed far better than they performed theirs, and of all men Albert Stanburrough Cook, whose personality was the North Pole against Phelps's Tropic, knew this and told me so.

Cook was as easy to hate as Phelps was to like. Courses, elementary and advanced, in enduring him should have been offered by the English faculty. One might have easily said that was what his own courses were. He hardly ever opened his lips without saying something dogmatic to which you were automatically opposed, or something pedantic to which reply seemed unnecessary. His methods of teaching were all his own, and strange enough they were. Thus his first assignment in Old English (you said Anglo-Saxon at your peril) was a work on Japanese chivalry (since proved to be a figment of the mind) called *Bushido* and vast juiceless segments of Montalembert's desiccated *Monks of the West*. These were supposed to engender a state of mind proper to the evaluation of the over-rated *Beowulf*, the nugatory "*Judith*," and the exciting "*Battle of Brunanburh*." Whether they did or no, it is certain that his tongue dripped poison in the classroom, as bitter as ever fell on Loki's brow. I have seen him so havoc an ugly and unintelligent woman graduate-student that the men in the class were trembling between rage and amusement, while the women, glaring like Megaeas at the oblivious tyrant, almost visibly locked their shields round the victim to protect her. I fancy he would have been astounded, if he had had the faintest notion of the passions he unloosed. Or perhaps he would only have laughed his mirthless laugh that always made me think of Fontenelle's: "Quelque fois j'ai dit ha ha." Either way it would have been a side-issue of his work, and "Blessed be drudgery" was his motto. He made that point abundantly

clear to the slaves in his intellectual harem, whom he daily "slippered and filled with the red pepper of his contempt." Some men hated him so that ten years after his death I have heard them speak of him with bitterness not even the grave could quench. But if you were lucky enough to get past a critical point, you suddenly found yourself, in defiance of reasonable probability and quite against your will, actually admiring the old devil. Philology was his mother. Literature was his love. And like all men who have been overdependent on their mothers he was not too understanding with respect to his mistress. Thus he was almost grotesquely incapable of appraising properly the unfamiliar and the new. And he would go off at half-cock about some modern abortion that he could fit into his oversymmetrical system of poetics. I think he really valued Milton and Dante as they should be valued, but I wish it had occurred to me to push home on the subject of Rabelais and so perhaps discover his nakedness. Nevertheless he was the first man who made clear to me the nobility of English as a language. No better tongue has been spoken or written by man, and Cook worshiped English, and could show you what was worshipful about it. However much I may mishandle it, he made me yearn not to. And at least in that connection his selfless enthusiasm burned away every vestige of pettifogging scholarship and academic pretense. In addition to this virtue he had the abrupt and not unpleasing frankness of those who are usually humorless. Life was strangely good to him, for in his later years, with visible reluctance, he grew kind to the point of gentleness. By that time I was absolutely fond of him and never missed a chance of calling in Bishop Street. On one occasion I brought him a copy of my translation of *The Song of Roland*. He was pleased by the tribute and asked me on what new work I might be engaged. I answered that a long satiric poem was on the ways. "How long?" "About eight thousand lines," "Ah," he said

after a moment, "Longue aleine." The mingled allusiveness, courtesy, and irony of that remark will only be gathered by the few who have read both *The Song of Roland* and my mock-epic. I hated him, I came to love him, and the news of the funeral of that grammarian was a grief to me.

Cook's most celebrated pupil was, and thank God is, Chauncey Tinker, by all odds the best lecturer in Yale for thirty years. Harvard in vain offered him the flesh-pots of Cambridge. And the remark of one of her brahmins on Tinker's refusal: "Professor Tinker ought to have considered his academic advancement," is remembered happily by all connoisseurs of unconscious humor. Tinker's famous course "Johnson and His Circle" is not so much a course as a living experience, like a journey in a beautiful and exciting country. Twenty years after I had taken it and after giving a pale version of it for four or five years myself, I slipped into a vacant seat in the rear row of his lecture-room. Halfway through he saw me and I knew from some experience of the Tinkerian expression how he resented the interloper. Brazenly I remained, and I am glad I did, for the performance was as delightful to a man of forty-two as it was to a boy of twenty-one. To assist the scholar he has drawn on every art known to the actor. And no man who ever listened to him has ever forgot. More than a magnificent teacher, he has been to me a magnificent friend and philosopher. And it was he, who between mirth and contempt bullied me into taking Kreider's course of sprouts in physics, as two pennyworth of bread against the infinite deal of literary sack I had chosen as suitable beverage for my senior year. Following that wholly advantageous advice incidentally came within an ace of costing me my degree.

In close conjunction with Tinker at the time there was another more saturnine planet, who was an especial cynosure, Brian Hooker, the only poet I ever knew who really understood the laws of metrics. By guess and by God is the

usual method. But Brian knew more about prosody than Saintsbury and Omond rolled into one. The principles he formulated he enunciated, between periods of reflection, in his course on verse composition, which I for one found bloody well interesting. I also believe that I drove him practically insane by dogging him as if he were a criminal and by believing, to his visible horror, every word that proceeded out of his mouth. Nothing, as the wise have noted, is more disconcerting. Nor shall I forget his look of agony, when, having run him to earth at the "Players," I demanded an answer to a little question that troubled me at the time. It was only to know whether or no I should devote my life to poetry. A neater piece of sagacious evasion I do not remember to have encountered.

In some ways the most noteworthy figure of all was Henry Augustine Beers. I roomed with one of his sons and thus enjoyed a certain extra-curricular intimacy with the old gentleman, that could not be overvalued. Beers was literally a heaven-born genius, defeated in the common sense of the word by fate. Quite early in his career but after he had given fortune plenty of hostages, his most familiar friend committed suicide, and Beers, on a professor's salary, supported the dead man's family as well as his own quiverful. How he boiled the two pots God only knows. But his textbooks on the history of Romanticism sold well, and a poet of the first order was the sacrificial victim of his own altruism. His lectures were in the main rather dull affairs, but at some point invariably illuminated by such a flash of suggestion or wit as no two-spot could have dreamed. You had to be on your toes, for he never by any chance by any change of tone gave warning of the imminent bolt. It was as if he desired to conceal his lightnings. Athletes and dumb-bells slumbered unrebuked in his classes. And I think he would have sympathized with them, had he by any chance noticed them. For all the undergraduate could see, he was a nice

old man, who gave a student no trouble whatever. But call on him by his own fireside with the instructed or the fortunate. He offered you a cigar as dry as the White King's hay from a Chinese jar on the mantelpiece. And this you had to smoke. Now I have smoked cigars given me by garage men or proprietors of New England general stores, but no man has any notion of desiccated horror unless he has smoked with Beers. It was worth it. The rite properly initiated, he unlocked his word-hoard. And I can think of no comparison apter than of a connoisseur unrolling kake-monos before you. The depth, delicacy, and artistic economy of his pictures of what he had seen or known remain unrivaled in my experience. A word and he had sketched Emerson or Hawthorne with a Rembrandt stroke. Forgotten poets of the seventies were suddenly as they had been before they lost the future. No aspect of life and literature that he did not touch and adorn with his beautiful New England Doric speech. He made you see the beauty that you had neglected, the connection you had missed. If Cook first exhibited to me the nervous power of English, it was Beers who made it clear that it became a man to have read Greek epic and Greek tragedy, and that you had better know your Dante and your Goethe too. If I plowed through the whole *Odyssey* after I got out of college, and years afterwards with such Greek as an American has at forty tackled the *Agamemnon*, the *Bacchae*, and the *Alcestis*, it was in great measure due to him. There wasn't a trace of the pedant about him, nor do I remember hearing him utter the word scholarship. Certainly no pedant that ever was born could have covered the world of literature as he covered it. I despair of painting the mere appearance of the delightful old creature as he sat, his face all courteous sympathy, smoking his god-awful cigar in the firelight. And I utterly despair of giving, and forswear even the attempt to

give, any account of the golden talk, whose like, I dimly knew, I should seldom hear again.

Last, not as most important but for another reason, I set "Napoleon" Wheeler, whose *Modern European History* was as entertaining and enlightening as Tinker's great course. He had earned his soubriquet. The epic of Bonaparte was part of the fiber of his brain. And it was an article of student faith that at his famous annual "Waterloo Lecture" tears ran down his iron cheek when it became necessary for him to unravel the skein of blunder and accident, that resulted in Grouchy's fatal maneuver. In 1867 or thereabouts he had seen a bastard of the Emperor, Prince Roland Bonaparte, I think, presiding harmlessly at some meeting of the Institut de France. And his voice had the whole Marseillaise in it when he mentioned the circumstance. No doubt his ideas and methods would be ruled out of court by the economist historians of these times, who as yet are blissfully unaware that the psychological school is already knocking at their gate, to mete out to them the measure they meted to the more entertaining Leckys and Macaulays. I never knew Professor Wheeler well, but he took some faint interest in me and once said to me something curiously personal. "You write verses, do you not?" he asked me. I admitted it. He went on: "Don't give it up. I knew a man, who did." By mere chance I knew of his own son's brilliant beginning and subsequent disaster. And it was to that I suppose that he alluded. The last lecture he delivered before he retired was to the address of the last class I attended before we were graduated. The circumstance was not without its sentiment and its symbolism. His comment on a moment, which had its point for us as for him, might be foreign to the easier, looser-girt taste of our time, but I fancy that Samuel Johnson might have said of the stiff rhetoric: "Very well, sir. You have said well, sir."

The more I consider my pastors and masters the more

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they appear a remarkable lot. Nor do I think I am seeing them through the conventional golden haze. They knew their subjects, they developed them ably, and they encouraged by-products which, it is a commonplace to say it, are quite as important in the world of the mind as in the world of technology. Not a day passes, but I have reason to thank them for the extras. One could hardly say more.

❧ IV ❧

YALE—2

A GREAT part of the last chapter was devoted to shepherds. In this I propose to deal with some parts of the system of oviculture and an occasional sheep. Life at New Haven in the ultra-violet decade was in some ways simpler, in some ways more stereotyped, and by no means better than at present. I am reasonably sure that the run of the mine undergraduate today is a higher animal than our average thirty years ago. He has to be. It is harder to get in and to stay in than of old. Also almost before he enters he knows that the huge choice of possibilities that lay before us has been disconcertingly narrowed. We could lie on our oars in calm seas and drift comfortably toward innumerable enchanted islands. There aren't any calm seas any more. And the fortunate islands seem to have vanished in volcanic disturbances. At least they do not appear on the charts of any admiralty. The unfit, the ignorant, the dull, not infrequently in our time found themselves holding simply elegant cards at the poker table of fortune. That, I think, we knew or suspected and it did not diminish a sense that the four years were meant to be carefree. But even a Princeton Sophomore knows better now, when he sees the able and intelligent thrown out of jobs on their ear. It is reasonable

to ask whether the undergraduate today is to be pitied or congratulated because of the loss of Paradise.

One came, one saw, one was accepted or ignored by the "social system," the hierarchy of fantastically secret societies. Timidly one beheld "far off three mountain-tops, three silent pinnacles," "Bones," "Keys," "Wolf's Head" overshadowing the lesser bulk of "Elihu Club" and the mere foothills of the fraternities. Of the three hundred and twenty men in my class, I venture to guess that only two Chinamen and a couple of negroes had given no thought to these features of the moral landscape, and one of the Chinamen actually made a successful ascent of one of the lower summits. The other Chinaman, an able, brilliant, and high-minded man, was abandoned to his non-Aryan fate. We endeavored in a somewhat sour manner to be jovial about the system. Arthur Baker's limerick about the junior fraternities is still remembered:

*Alcibiades was Alpha Delta Phi
And Rameses the Great was Zeta Pi.
And though Shylock was a Jew
Still they took him in Psi U.
But Socrates was Beta Theta Pi.*

Four or five years ago I was exquisitely surprised, when a sort of rejoinder to this quip, this time about the senior societies, was quoted to me by an undergraduate, intact, handed down by oral tradition, just as it was written twenty years before. It does not run so easily as Arthur Baker's, but it has the extreme merit of mentioning explicitly the utterly unmentionable, and I believe I wrote it myself.

*I saw Aristides taken into "Bones."
And I hailed the glad event in joyful tones.
But when Alcibiades
Had the nerve to throw down "Keys,"
And Pericles went "Wolf's Head," there were groans.*

Anyone who ever witnessed an old-fashioned tap-day, when the applause or hisses of the mob were a striking part of the drama, will perceive that the picture, however feeble, is realistic enough. And anyone who has seen the track-captain of his year weep without shame when he at length realized that the hand of fate was not going to be laid on his shoulder, will, I think, agree with me that the order of things stood, as it still stands, in need of modification. In this as in more important matters the minor pleasures of the few depend to an unnecessary degree upon the disappointment of the many.

Certainly I was not above such ambitions, and quite as certainly I had not been a week in New Haven, before I knew that I should never do more than drink from one of the lesser chalices, which in time came to pass. Happily for me I had a real interest in literature and was determined to be a poet, cost what it might. And this vainglorious desire, which had the merit of being honest and real, saved me from a lot of tremulous intrigue and from the immoderate heart-burning of those who thought only of the Junior-year lottery. Also that desire threw me almost at once into delightful contact with a group of sympathetic young men, Freshmen, Sophomores and Juniors, who had similar tastes. Before us the *Lit* appeared, a glorious goal more desirable, believe it or not, than any quantity of Bones. Monthly we besieged the portals, bearing things we hoped were unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

The *Lit* at that time had an office in the basement of White Hall, where the editors, portentous Seniors, sat in season to skin and flay. Cabalistic marks beside their initials on our manuscripts indicated how little they thought of ewe-lambs. And for once in his life, the sucking author was exposed to criticism which, however incompetent, was as honest as it ever gets. Blinded by no consideration except their own likes and dislikes, the young gods sat in broken-

down chairs around a circular table, and in turn took the neophyte on horrible intellectual excursions. With splendid brutality they abused ineptitude or sentimentality, or in more favorable mood suggested changes or omissions. They were not learned young men, but for real assistance to the ambitious, they were unrivaled, for besides being an editorial board they were a sort of skeleton public as well. Rank idealists, with no axe of whatever kind to grind, they praised or they sacrificed as the spirit moved them. And up to the limit of their abilities they told you why. And presently when the 1907 board put on the purple, there was one among them.

The cadaverous, pale-freckled face and tomato-soup-colored hair of that singular Junior who was to be the first American to win the Nobel Prize for literature could not be ignored then any more than now. "Harry" Lewis was as different from the correct young types around him as Sauk Center is from Tuxedo. He had none of their artificial constraints and far more real dignity of nature. He stormed and he damned, but again he might roar you as gently as a sucking-dove. And his hates and his loves were genuine and never compromised by ulterior and clandestine desires, although there was nothing he would not do to assist fellow-sufferers among the rocks and briars of the lower slopes of the two-horned mountain. His classmates I believe had viewed him with alarm, had been cruel with respect to his irascibilities which were passionate, and had ignored his talents which were obvious to every "heeler" of the *Lit.* Our admiration, I feel sure, was not unpleasant to him and there was quite a group of us who instinctively endeavored to do him honor. This reflects some credit on us, for Harry did not belong to any society and never would, which does not add anything to the prestige of the classes of 1906 and 1907. He was apart from that kind of thing, and in one way from the college, for he did not even live in it. He had

a room in a cheap boarding-house outside the pale of the university, where I perused a typed volume of his poetry four inches thick, and discussed with him the merits of an equally fat book by an author who never won the Nobel Prize. The unfortunate's name was Swinburne, to us at the time a figure who meant liberty and the casting-off of fetters.

Harry was a scarlet thread in the drab of my Freshman year, and after I returned from my enforced stay abroad, in my Junior year. I never have had a better time with any man than when we sat over welsh-rarebits and beer at the Hof-Braü, and disposed of the past and the future with great impartiality and equal authority. Poetry was his love, and I am still astonished at the direction in which his fate took him. It was clear even then that he was a comer, but in 1905 I should have predicted for him the lyric, perhaps the epic, but not the photographic. In a satire twenty years later I adjured him to return to his early altars. Furthermore I believe he will before he dies. He came into the world not to turn a candid camera on Babbitt, but to revel in something as old as the Tale of Troy and as new as the aeroplane. If he finds it, he will create out of his unabated natural forces something that will force us to think at once of *War and Peace* and *The Three Musketeers*. And his sunset will be as surprising to the world as his dawn was to me.

I have a last vignette of him in New Haven. Harry in his Senior year, 1906-1907, had given up college in mid-term for the delights of Upton Sinclair's Utopian experiment, Helicon Hall. Strange as it may seem to Marxian youth, many of the staunchest reactionaries they know were rampant socialists then, a fact that should give Marxian youth pause. Upton Sinclair appointed Sinclair Lewis furnace-man in the New Jersey Utopia, which led Harry to form a low opinion of that belated Brook Farm. He returned disillusioned in the autumn of 1907 after the graduation of his class, to round out his degree and become once more the

delight of the slaves of the *Lit*. We had long walks and talks. And a strange fantasy of his about the sphinx became a symbol for me which has been dominant in my thought, if I may call it thought, these thirty stricken years. I was a candidate for the *Lit* (last place) and everything hung on whether or no one final poem were accepted before the election. Harry Lewis, my delightful roommate Harry Beers (also a candidate but a sure one), and I went down to read the bulletin of the chosen, which the Board would post in the window of the *Lit* office late that night. It was blowing a gale and black as pitch in the Berkeley Oval, and many lucifers went out before we were certain that "The Ballade of the Golden Horn" was safely on the list. I have never known a moment of greater triumph, and no other Nobel Prizeman has struck so many matches in my behalf.

Though an enormous and irreplaceable part, Harry Lewis was by no means the whole of existence in those pleasant years. Beers, with whom I roomed for two of them, was as interesting a man as one could hope to know. He was gentle and had inherited his father's fine, delicate, distinguished speech. He loved German literature and was always quoting Wilhelm Meister for his own purposes. My tastes have never dovetailed better with those of any man. To me he was a piece of pure good fortune. And his sympathy and sense of humor (how often those two go together!) made 342 White a pleasant place.

Al Loomis I never saw much of except at the dinners of the "Pundits" in Senior year. But his was an immensely powerful mind, which has been conclusively demonstrated in two unrelated fields. He first attracted my attention when before my delighted eyes he proved on the principles of the Baconians, that a poem of Dunbar's, who died in 1519 had been written by Francis Bacon, who wasn't born till 1561. Since that singular performance he has found time to be a successful banker and a first-rate physicist, and by that I

don't mean a bloody amateur attracted by the fairy-tales of science.

I saw more of a most attractive Jew, named Robert Moses, who already had given striking proof of the courage by convention denied to his race and, by a convention as absurd, attributed to the Aryan. He was automatically excluded from the social privileges reserved for the inheritors of the Great Tradition. But he made himself a position of power in our little world, by the same methods of straightforward outspokenness that have made him a figure in the nation. I was touched and amused when a writer in the *New Yorker* a year or two ago described how Moses shocked front to front against Walter Camp, dictator of football, and defeated him with great slaughter, to the advantage of swimming. To an undergraduate, a Jew, the victory remained. It was as if Walt Disney had overthrown Hitler, which may happen yet. That the imbecile anti-semitism of half-grown boys should have cramped his form in any respect is no compliment to our collective intelligence. He of all men needs to worry least on the point, when twelve million call him blessed today. Is it too much to hope, with a recent writer in *Harper's Magazine*, that a hundred and twenty millions may do so presently?

Wholly different but quite as exciting was Leonard Kennedy. The leit-motif of his powerful nature was "satiableness," which, if it be connected with a rational mind, is of all qualities most charming. There was nothing whose mystery was not interesting to him, even after he had plucked out the heart of it. It is no wonder to me that he was the first man to give an intelligent account of the half-mile-high cataracts of British Guiana, or that he tore down a mountain inside the city limits of Rio de Janeiro. The engineer, the furiously active reorganizer of countless ruined companies, never lost his passion for literature in all its forms and parts down to the very mechanics of prosody. And I

have discussed metrics with him in the "Down Town Club," while from adjoining tables ancestral voices prophesied terrible things about Cerro de Pasco and Great Northern Preferred. He himself pointed out on that occasion, that such a subject had in all probability never been canvassed in those precincts before. Golf, the development of the over-sea airlines, trout-fishing, South American bonds, dog-breeding, first editions, there was nothing he was not mixed up in and could not be exciting about. I loved him for twenty years and it is worth while to possess his vivid and entertaining memory.

Their name is legion in my own and other classes. Francis Riggs who came through the Russian Revolution to be assassinated in Puerto Rico, Jim McConaughy now presiding to perfection over Wesleyan University, Kim Townsend, the only honest-to-God faun I ever knew, Tom Beer with the mind that glittered and penetrated till it hurt, Wayland Williams, poet, novelist, painter, and still to me most sympathetic of men, provided me sport-royal. I hope I gave it back in kind.

Taking stock I find little to regret in comparison with what still rejoices me. But I think the regrets are worth mentioning. I am glad I wasted no time on economics which perpetually changes for the worse or on philosophy which never alters for the better. But I wish I had not dropped Latin and Greek at the end of Freshman year. I wish I had gotten over my prep-school antipathy to mathematics in time formally to cultivate the cross-grained muses. I wish I had got a reading knowledge of German, even if for all literary and scientific purposes it has since become a dead language. French I already had sufficiently, Italian I subsequently obtained, but German in the same degree would have been a great addition to my pleasure. The boy of these times, parenthetically, should go all out on Russian,

which has got the future which German, through the folly of politicians, has definitely lost.

Finally I regret, as an experience, though not as a piece of comedy, an extra-curricular item, namely, a love-affair into whose details it is not necessary to go, though it was clear from the first to the lady as to me that the situation was impossible. Very likely it did neither of us any permanent injury. It was virtuous past expression, and perhaps that was the trouble. It came to the end it deserved, after a series of emotional crises on my part and much consideration and kindness on hers. The worst you could say about it, is that situations which are fundamentally unreal, and which have no prospect of becoming factual are good things to avoid. And as between the sexes any situation that more or less ignores sexuality is a piffling situation. Plato be damned. Like Clive Newcome, I never saw a pretty woman yet without wanting to kiss her and I frequently have. And according to me that is the way to be. But to keep things on the spiritual plane is not only impossible but hateful hypocrisy. That was what I tried. And no wonder if I had my first nervous breakdown, when the affair blew up.

Before that happened, my college career ended in what had to me all the earmarks of a blaze of glory. I was elected class-poet against a rival, whose defeat, rather than my triumph, was celebrated in every daily in America, because he was the son of one who had been vice-president of the republic. It was my first taste of publicity. The notices of victory in a thousand papers, after a detailed account of my adversary's personality and general quality, wound up with this sentence: "The successful candidate was Leonard Bacon of Peace Dale, Rhode Island," which still describes me pretty well.

Class day came, and I delivered not without applause that famous poem, which with the insolence of youth I had been so sure I should deliver that I began its composition months

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before I was chosen for the purpose. In the list of candidates for the baccalaureate in arts, arranged in order of merit, the university printed my name in the exact center of the not too intellectual class of 1909. And I went forth from the half-light of a world of learning and young mirth into the surrounding darkness of an America which seemed not to care particularly for poets, class or otherwise.

THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN

LIKE my career at St. George's, my career at Yale suffered an important interruption. I had not broadened in proportion to my height and was, I suppose, abominably scrawny. An amiable Boston specialist took the flattering position that this circumstance was due to a tubercular lesion in the apex of the left lung, though the fluoroscope reveals today no trace of any scar. I personally never believed it, and when he pronounced the dreadful judgment in his Marlborough Street office, I wasn't even frightened. But my parents were, and instantly jerked me out of college, so that, as I should certainly then have put it, I "lost" my whole Sophomore year. Instead I was whisked abroad to a "lunger" station, not a formal sanitarium, in the Alps above Montreux, where I lived the hermetic life of the supposed sufferer for six months—in my twentieth year. This is no cinch. Bed is not the place to hear distant dance music, even if one does not care a great deal for dancing. Nothing is gained as one sits, like a man in bonds, wrapped in fur coats and blankets, while the bobsledders, shouting for mere animal spirits, hurl past below one's balcony.

Happily for me the school of thought which with a refinement of cruelty forbade books to the sufferer, lest his

mind and temperature be unsettled by unprofitable contemplation, was in fortunate eclipse. I did not have to endure the hellish emptiness and void which at one time were an essential part of the "cure." On the contrary I sat a great part of every day on my balcony which faced the blue-white ice-walls of the Rochers de Naye, and the dizzy spike of the Dent du Jaman, and read and read. It was in some sort a listless performance, for part of it was intended to keep me abreast of my class four thousand miles away. I got through quantities of Racine and Corneille, *Gil Blas de Santillane*, damned well worth while too, if only for the episode of the Doctor Sangrado, monographs on Swiss history, novels by Hugo, and the parochial poetry of the Lake School (of Geneva). The fat volume in which I first read of

Un roi d'Yvetot
Peu connu dans l'histoire

did not fail to entertain me. But oh how I wish I had had a good go at the seventy volumes of Voltaire in that winter of my discontent. Instead I went all out on the English Pre-Raphaelites, and blessed the name of "the good Baron Tauchnitz," that true, delightful, and inexpensive friend of invalid and exile.

Also I developed some of the usual interests of the prisoner. I never made friends with the spider. But even with two feet of snow on the ground, birds did not desert Les Avants. The big black yellow-billed merle fed daily on the crumbs which I carefully distributed at tea-time on an iron balcony table. The tomtit was never absent from my board. And the chaffinch, most beautiful and tame of European birds (in this instance the adjectives are not contradictory) visited me all afternoon. However affected it may appear to dwell on such circumstances, from them I have always derived indescribable satisfactions. A flock of magpies in flight, a humming-bird at rest, starlings, a distant globe of atoms

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now darkly visible, then, as they wheel wing-edge on, utterly vanished, move and touch me in ways I cannot express. Only yesterday a triangle of black-duck that flew down my trout-stream and were smitten with horror on discovering me interloping round a bend, gave me a vision of terror and beauty that no poet has so far got on paper. The little birds of the Alps did me no harm in that limited winter.

I was not wholly confined. During a part of each day, I was permitted a sort of diluted exercise. Weather permitting, I walked daily to Cubly, where yet stood the ruins of a medieval watch-tower, whence, according to the local historians, horrified Vaudois had once watched the red turbans of Saracen raiders in the plain where the Rhone runs into the lake. I saw no Saracens, but I did see the massive bastions of the Chablais towering over the waters, blue or shark-tooth-colored, as the skies might be. Also the long slopes southward, terraced with tawny vines, were not hard to look at. But the snows come early at a thousand meters and presently they shut us in for as much as two weeks at a time.

Foul weather under such circumstances was something not to forget. For half the people in the hotel (a sanitarium in plain clothes) carried their secret wounds. When they could no longer escape, the place became an epitome of doom and gloom. You could not forget why they had come there. And they gave up the effort. Superficially there wasn't anything striking about them except for their pathetic attempts to behave like people in normal health and for their persistent habit of stating that they were already much better. I knew in particular an Englishman named Sharp who was so much better on Friday that he was dead on Monday. And episodes of that description did not add anything to the general encouragement when the snow squalls howled round the machine-made cornices of the Hotel du

Jaman. Not even Thomas Mann can tell me much about magic mountains.

The little community, two hotels, ours and its more fashionable neighbor, were between them the whole Feast of Pentecost. Armenians and Russians with black beards and blouses, rubbed shoulders with Galician gentlemen, who put on dinner-coats for luncheon to the unconcealed and viperish horror of English sublieutenants, who had come for the Christmas skiing. One particular subaltern, who had looked his feelings at Central Europe's sartorial imbecility, made a sort of impression upon me, if only for his capacity to misunderstand other human beings. He was the superb quintessence of British dulness, personally ill-favored, and unnecessarily clumsy in his mind. I had enough sense to dislike him and I dare say he reciprocated. I don't even remember his name. But seven years later I saw his face again among a dozen other uniform pieces, just as he was when I had the misfortune to know him. With his compeers he had got into the *Illustrated London News*, and the caption over the group was "Roll of Honor." Probably this brief and final publicity was due to some bonehead advance, as awkward as his skiing. But unlike Oscar Wilde, he did not die beneath his means.

Pleasant things befell me in my exile. My delightful Aunt Caroline, then president of a great woman's college, arrived at Vevey, our point of contact with the world whose lungs were not under suspicion. She made things agreeable on principle, and in support of this policy she brought with her Miss Katharine Lee Bates, a lady who made a business of treating adolescents as if their opinions merited consideration. She carried her belief so far that when I had the temerity not to read *La Nouvelle Héloïse* which she had given me, she was merely satisfactorily diverted. For this I cannot be sufficiently thankful. That lady had in her nature whatever Diotima of the *Symposium* had and even more.

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Her positive sympathy for the young of both sexes was a *laissez passer* to their confidence, and I respect it the more now, because in later years I have not always found it easy to feel it myself. Nothing at the time suggested to me that nearly thirty years later I should make the oration over a monument which academic piety set up in her honor in the Boston Fenway. No vulgar words of mine or anyone else could express her gentle dealing with a whole generation. And I cannot overpraise her kindness to me in particular. Under her roof I discovered and read everything that Yeats had so far consigned to print. And except for my father, she was the only person I knew who shared my irrational passion for William Morris. She never attempted to impose her tastes on others. And I was aware that in her presence I was at liberty to speak of what pleased me, well or ill chosen, as the spirit moved me, without penalty attached. All she desired was frankness, an art almost lost then, and wholly lost now, when young lions delivered to publicity, utter, under the impression that they are really coming clean, opinions not even they have ever believed.

Her parting gift to me, when she and my aunt departed for Egypt, was a cheap edition of Shelley, which, accuracy compels me to admit, I hardly opened for a year and a half. I defend myself on the ground that I knew the lyrics already and that I perhaps foresaw that "The Revolt of Islam" would have indefensible *longueurs*. It was not till wholly restored in health and on an island in Lake Asquam with the west wind blowing that I almost accidentally opened that volume—at "Prometheus Unbound." For three days Harry Beers and I had existed, naked as jay-birds, on that island—something that few people have ever done. In the silly spirit of the young literary animal I opened the book, and, I am glad to say, read like a drunkard for three hours, till my arms and legs were tingling from the impaired circulation produced by an unchanged attitude. I had read

greater poems before, and I have read greater poems since, but that was the time and the place. The birches murmuring above me, the moss on which I lay, the great blast of warm wind, the clapping of the waves it drove against the boulders, the physical nakedness, the spiritual excitement of the noble poetry, persuaded me to a manner of thought which I do not regret to remember. Out of that poem I got some inkling of what the Hindus mean when they say a man is "twice born." And though never in my life have I written a poem explicitly correlated with that experience, since that moment I have never written one out of my entrails that was not connected with it at least by indirection. The thick green book "on grey paper with blunt type" has memorably affected an existence which till this writing at any rate, has given its beneficiary a kick.

But this is getting ahead of events as they happened. There was too much tension for that hotel to become altogether a temple of fatal dulness. One noticed that the beautiful Miss St. George, always dressed in spotless white, appeared less and less in the lounge and not at all in the dining-room. The black-bearded Russian grew more and more like an El Greco martyr from week to week. The handsome Polish girl, who loved languages for their own beautiful sakes, was not getting better. On the other hand my friend the Swede, Bucht, was happily on the mend. Bucht was an acquisition. He had come down with the universal sickness during the mobilization of the Swedish army at the moment of the secession of Norway. No one has ever sufficiently praised old Oscar I, who refused to let his two peoples fight about one of his crowns. But Bucht was an actual casualty in a war that never was fought. He got to the Alps just in time, and, by the exercise of good Scandinavian sense, presently got on top of his trouble. He had been a *privat-dozent* at Upsala in mathematics and astronomy. And it was fun to be with a man who could get excited about the orbit of a

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comet. We had long and delightful talks then, and an elaborate correspondence afterward. One queer experience I had with him. We parted in French in 1907, and our ways never crossed again but once in Goettingen in 1911, when we met in German. Few friendships have had to endure a complete change of language. I lost track of him during the war, and regret it. His delightful simplicity and an education which was to mine what mine was to a boot-black's, made me admire him. And I don't care a damn if, as was probably the case, he was one of the routine practitioners of his difficult science rather than an expander of its boundaries.

The pet, the cynosure, the great man of the Hotel du Jaman, was, however, the General Baron Kirgener de Planta, who was there taking care of his wife and ailing daughter, and who was one of the nicest men I ever knew. There was a mystery about him too, which bothered better persons than I who finally solved it. He descended to Montreux daily, returning on the train, which, with the appalling regularity of the Swiss, arrived at 6:26 P.M. sharp. He would be wearing a tweed knickerbocker suit, a loden cloak, and a Tyrolese hat. Four minutes later, at 6:30 exactly, he would enter the dining-room in his "smoking" with no appearance of having achieved a miracle. Naturally invalids with nothing to do wondered how the devil it was done. One evening the general was telling with great energy some anecdote of old wars. He leaned forward and a gap appeared between his dress-vest and the edge of his shirt-front. In that gap there was nothing except an oatmeal colored crescent of woolen undershirt. The hero of Solferino and of Bourbaki's "snow march" wore that hateful article a "dickey" instead of a dress-shirt. Thus his miraculous celerity was explained. Be that as it may, his yarns were impayable, ranging from items about dances at the Tuileries to how MacMahon heard the firing and in defiance of orders marched toward

Magenta,* thus putting off Sedan eleven years. Or again how his orderly handed him a box of matches as the cavalry waited under fire at Villersexel, and when he turned around to give them to the man, "Il n'avait plus de tête." Or yet again how his regiment in Bourbaki's horrible retreat had marched over a pass in the Jura at twenty-eight degrees below and escaped internment or capture, with the result that ten days later they were swopping long range shots with Kabyles in the Algerian Desert. The old man had more or less ended his military career as the innocent villain of a great historic drama. Of this he told me no stories. He presided, I am perfectly certain, in complete ignorance of the intrigues behind the forged evidence, over the first court-martial of Dreyfus. I learned this much from that charming and courteous old man, that professional soldiers have the best manners in the world, as I subsequently discovered that pacifists in general have the worst.

In my enforced idleness I became perhaps unreasonably curious about people around me. It was not unlike being at sea. And in my mild way I tried to identify species and imagine lives and motives, as Edmondo de Amicis did on his wonderful voyage to Buenos Aires. It is a delightful game which may be played anywhere and does no harm to anyone except occasionally to the practitioner. When one of his intuitions proves to be correct, he is too apt to forget his failures. And that way madness lies, as I subsequently and bitterly discovered. In any case the habit of observing people as a sport grew upon me. It amused an invalid, subject to many boredoms, and it certainly led to my witnessing an enigma, with which I still play in my mind without hope of a solution. At the neighboring hotel a strikingly pretty girl, who bore one of the great English names, was staying for the winter sports. I knew her slightly and she was just as nice as they can come in England, gentle and high-bred.

* Or Solferino for aught I know.

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I admired her rather shiftlessly from the prison of my illness, which I was apt to do with respect to every attractive girl at that time. Some errand took me to Vevey one day, a town which in my circumstances had for me all the excitement of a world capital. It can be imagined how I lingered in the solitary bookshop, where I bought my Tauchnitzes. On my return it was dusk and the little station and the platform at Chamby, where one changed for Les Avants, were jammed with coasters who were waiting for the train up the hill. From the inside of the station I observed my pretty English girl in conversation with the physically magnificent and extremely unpleasant-looking *sous-chef-de-gare*, whose personal appearance might well have had some connection with the famous song about his superior. I wondered listlessly why she should be talking with such a person, but fancied she was practising her French. This certainly was not the explanation, for quite suddenly he seized her by the shoulders, bent her stiff as a ramrod thirty degrees out of the vertical, restored her to her erect position, and took his abhorrent hands off her. It was over before one could think. He didn't kiss her. No one else saw. She made no sound of surprise or protest. And their conversation continued without further accident till the arrival of the train. What it was all about I cannot fathom. But it made me think then, as it makes me think now, of what Dickens said was the queerest sight he had seen in his prowls about London—a woman in *grande tenue* throwing a rose from a window to a beggar crouched in the area below, to a beggar who instantly made off as soon as he caught the flower. I saw that pretty girl once or twice afterwards, but not being as brave as the Ronsard imagined by Browning, though at least as inquisitive, I never satisfied my curiosity.

By Christmas I was well enough to go down for the holidays in Geneva. The little bustling city was a grimmer place

than the bright summer town I remembered eight years back. The skies were like greasy zinc, and the lake waves curled coldly under a perpetual black bise. But there were delightful bookshops, and the friends of my father's boyhood made things very pleasant for us. Geneva is an odd town governed by traditions as strange as, and very like, Boston's. To this day it is a real distinction to be a Burgher of the City as opposed to a mere Swiss citizen. And it is an unwritten but binding law that no one amounts to anything in the social life of the town, unless his ancestors came there with, or before, Theodore of Beza, Calvin's contemporary and biographer. Wit, learning, beauty, money, mean nothing against the defect of this necessity. Thus one eminent family distinguished for eight generations, whose forebears had been the intimates of Frederick the Great, of Voltaire, of Rousseau, were still in 1907 hardly qualified to attend the equivalents of a Cabot wedding or a Saltonstall funeral. The ancient houses paid strict attention to such details, but they were reasonably cordial to foreigners, as Bostonians may be to Philadelphians.

In Geneva I made, under peculiar circumstances, the most peculiar friend I have ever had. As I entered the dining-room one evening I beheld a man engaged in what to me is the most enigmatic of amusements. Between mouthfuls he was reading the score of an opera. A cuneiform tablet would have seemed more entertaining to a person of my limitations, and accordingly I paid some attention to his appearance. In the midst of the table d'hôte propriety of the meal, an old English clergyman, whose white hair and beard gave him the look of an incompetent minor prophet, went quite literally mad at an adjoining table. Leaping to his feet, he delivered a passionate but incoherent jeremiad to the appalled guests of the Grand Hotel des Bergues. The sad-faced woman, wife, sister, daughter, who was his keeper, pulled him down by the coat-tails, and he sank into a

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volcanic silence that had promise of future eruptions. The scene was the extreme limit of the pathetic and the ludicrous. But the man with the opera score caught my eye at the high pitch of the excitement. Duly at the end of the meal he came over to our party and introduced himself to my father. So began an extraordinary part of my education. For reasons unnecessary to state, he shall be nameless, but he was in a great sense my teacher. And from that absurd origin, dated a long series of what still seem to me notable conversations and letters more notable still.

The man with the opera score had been a journalist at home, but now hung loose upon society abroad. He was small, thin, white-skinned, and *chétif*, but he knew everything and everybody, and, as far as I was concerned, the mere fact that he existed was the essence of excitement and romance. For the moment to a boy of twenty he was the delight of the intellect. Without ostentation, for fun, by chance, he knew the right book, the play to see, the music to hear. Never did a man understand better the distinction between what is new and what appears to be so. For years his letters kept me abreast of odd tendencies in the European mind that I could never have found out for myself in any book. Sometimes he was penetrating, sometimes merely pleasantly peripheral. And I am glad I did not miss the delightful tangents on which he sent me off. Yet I think I knew from the first that there was something about the man with the opera score, and perhaps about me too, that of itself would make the relation transitory.

The holidays ended and we returned to the snows. But there was promise now. The doctors were going to let me go before the Narcissus came. The *râles* in which I could never bring myself to believe were diminishing, if they ever existed. One wouldn't have to say "ninety-nine" and cough at command much longer, and Italy appeared in the offing as a present for a virtuous invalid. I was permitted to coast

and even to ski a little. And the bobsledders no longer appeared hateful and superior animals, overprivileged with respect to health. The months went past slowly but they went. After one terrible last round of winter when the blizzard was continuous for two weeks, except for a break which lasted an hour, we went through the Gotthard into the delicious experience of the Italian spring.

"Open my heart and you shall see, etc.," but hackneyed quotations aside, one ought to begin Italy as I began it, after six months' depressed confinement in a second-rate Alpine Hotel. It was good to be in Venice, but to be in Florence was very heaven. I ate with my eyes. If the Belinis in the Academia made me sick for pleasure, what emotions about the Benozzo Gozzoli Chapel in the Riccardi Palace? I still think the Emperor John Palaeologus and the spear-bearer behind the Magnifico two of the noblest things man ever made. But it wasn't only painting. It was everything else. It was the violet-veined obelisks supported on the backs of supremely competent bronze tortoises. It was Marzocco on the iron vane above the Guelphic battlements. It was the roaring, cursing election mob, that grew suddenly quiet when twenty-five lancers rode into the square. It was the poignant sympathy of the chamber-maid when the signorino ate too many little white figs. It was the strange food and the stranger bargaining and the gaiety of streets which invented gaiety. And my curse, like that of better men, is on the head of the nationalistic gangster who has turned the pleasantest race on the planet into the insincere, lacklustre, and unhappy accomplices of his grandiosely unintelligent designs.

The man with the opera score turned up in Florence to comment and expatiate, as always charmingly. But he was still more effective in Rome. He belonged to the type for whom what we call Classic has more meaning than the Medieval or the Romantic. For this I cannot be sufficiently

grateful, because I belong, as I suppose, to the opposed camp. With Tacitus and Suetonius and Gibbon at his tongue's end he made Rome, "that bad arrangement in yellow plaster," a place of unimaginable vitality. In the ruined corridors of the Palatine, he compelled me to feel the dagger through my side, when he spoke of the conspiracy against Commodus. A year later I understood, because of him, Roman jokes in the notes to Gibbon. I had not yet read the great passage in the *Autobiography* about the monks chanting vespers in the temple of Jupiter. But the man with the opera score in our walks about the city fully prepared me to appreciate and taste "a stranger metamorphosis than any dreamed of by Ovid." How should I forget looking out from the higher ruins over the Forum blazing white in the sun, while he poured into my ear droll stories of the Late Republic or the *chronique scandaleuse* of the exarchate of Ravenna? In spite of his Classic faith he was interested in the change of things. And next to my father I owe to the man with the opera score my interest in what has been called "the edges of history," Hellenistic Greece, the beginnings of the medieval darkness, the Byzantine Empire, which curiously enough has protected me from boredom, when more sufficient men have turned first in despair and then with a sickly willingness—to bridge.

Anyhow one's first taste of Rome could not have had better auspices. He even exhibited to me the realities of the modern city so that the continuity of life that for three millennia has never ceased to cataract through those mean streets had meaning, vividness, and for all its bourgeois drabness, charm. I got from the man with the opera score some little sense of the difference between "blacks" and "whites," and why the opinions of a Prince Colonna were at variance with those of a free mason official in the admiralty. The types may be found in cities of the untrammelled West. And a member of the Union League Club is like one

and Mr. Thomas Corcoran is like the other. No compliment to either is implied. Such divergencies in thought and feeling deserve more careful study than they are apt to get. If men thought of such matters at all, perhaps Italy would not be the intellectual hell-hole it is at present. And the United States would have more bread and fewer circuses. But at the moment, though I perceived some of the implications of the irrepressible conflict, I saw nothing fatally established by our stars.

It was my first intention to let the man with the opera score come across my little stage only at the proper chronological moments. But it seems better to polish him off all at once in spite of the dangers incurred in leaping ahead of the narrative. For years his ideas affected my life as Father Holt's affected Henry Esmond's. But at length it was borne in upon me that I could not see eye to eye with him. I could give his serious notions such intellectual sympathy as I might be capable of, but I could not feel with him on various matters. And for the first time in my life I permitted a relationship to break. It is a hateful thing to have to do and caused me pain. If it caused him some, I regret that aspect. Yet I know it was necessary for me to take the line I took.

More than fifteen years later, I spoke with him for the last time in Florence. He was old, visibly sick, and, something to me not to be explained, if one considered his former views, violently addicted to what our ancestors called the errors of Rome. Personally I greatly prefer Rome to Canterbury, and both are better than Geneva, but it is also true that I detest the lot. Accordingly the stereotyped arguments which he brought to bear against what he imagined to be my Protestant prejudices left me pretty cold, and that last meeting had nothing in it to remind me of our happier and earlier feasts of reason. In fact I was bored, and we parted with that extreme politeness which is the characteristic of unsuccessful encounters.

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A few days later the dust and trampling of a multitude in the Via Bolognese excited my curiosity and I went to an upper window to see what it was all about. Below me a Corpus Domini procession, as long as a division and with more banners, was worming its way from Monte Morello back into the city. Almost directly under me in the "black blockade" marched the man with the opera score, hatless, and sharing his breviary with a fat bourgeois, doubtless of equal or greater faith. It made me shudder to think that that feeble body and sickly white bald head had been exposed to two hours of a blazing Florentine sun. Later I remembered Pascal's bitter sentence: "Saying your office will deaden your intellect and you will be happy." I intend no innuendo, when I say that I hope he found happiness in the stupefaction of prayer. The more I think of him the more I am grateful for the good he did me. But I am even more grateful that my notion of reality, whatever its deficiencies, was different from his, and, according to me, nearer, by planetary diameters, to life as it is.

I did not foresee writing the preceding sentence, or this one for that matter, when we left Italy after two more delightful months than most people have ever had. Our luck continued for almost by art magic we found ourselves in Avignon. There Jeanne Jandrier, the daughter of Roumanille the poet, had opened the doors sensible people like to have opened, and Cousin Tom Janvier was no handicap either, for he was actually a foreign member of the great literary society, the *Félibrige*. The golden locust of the *Félibrige*, designed, I believe, by Fabre and executed by some superlative goldsmith, is the only badge I have ever coveted. And nothing could have been more effectively symbolic of a new poetry, in a language that had literally risen from the dead, than the exquisite image of an insect, which after seventeen years in darkness suddenly fills every copse with its high-pitched and beautiful cry.

Avignon, with its tremendous palaces and the glittering sunshine that somehow lets you know that it could be cold if it wanted to, was impressive enough. But Madame Roumanille would not let it go at that and was responsible for an experience which has been enduring for me. She took us to Maillane to meet Frederic Mistral.

Meeting men of distinction is often a dubious blessing for everyone concerned. The cynosure is apt to be bored or, still worse, embarrassed. And the hateful spirit of a press interview often broods over the encounter. I had read Mistral's autobiography, but his poetry was a closed book to a boy ignorant of Provençal. And as we drove out between the improbable hill towns, I fear that I was inspired by much the same emotions as those which trouble an autograph-hunter, who knows that Gary Cooper or Greta Garbo may be run down between acts in the lobby of the Schubert. Not much better in any case. It was a long drive in the slow autos of the time, that hit twenty-five at their peril. But we got there at the hour when the English require tea, and were welcomed in a manner that made me alter some prejudices about the French. Presently a man with the manners and appearance of a General of Cavalry entered the room, and before he had said a word conveyed to my immature mind the sense that I was in the midst of an experience like encountering Goethe. Whatever their elders may think, young people are quick about that sort of thing. And I do not flatter myself. It is simple truth that I knew I was in the presence of a superlative example of what the gods can make, a great creative creature, in every sense himself a masterpiece. Between him and the merely intelligent there was the difference between a line by Shakespeare and a line by Swinburne. More simply put, there wasn't a trace of what is called the literary about him. The simplicity of his spirit, of his speech, and of his courtesy, requires no comment, least of all mine. His air, as he gave his arm to my beautiful mother

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to escort her into the dining-room, where the *vin cuit* of the country was an exciting substitute for the gross corrupting tea of the Anglo-Saxon hemisphere, gave one furiously to think. Only great men have great manners. And I can say as one who has spoken with both, that Frederic Mistral could make the late Earl of Balfour look—like a diplomat.

His talk was the perfection of theirs who do not assume. It never entered his head that he ought to say something to enhance a prestige that had been already deserved, and which he for one ignored completely. One could see with no effort whatever that Lamartine must have been glad to show him around the salons in Paris fifty years before. And I venture to guess that Leconte de Lisle and Banville and even Baudelaire had winced slightly at beholding, for the first time, the genuine article. Anyhow in one lightning flash, such as even a boy may see, I learned the lesson, the beautiful lesson of the quintessence of the masculine, utterly separate from the effeminate, ignorant of the feeble epicene vulgarity, that for a whole generation for some reason had been to the fore in England, in France, in Italy, and in a republic across the Atlantic that had had a chance to know better.

One line in his *Isclò d'Or* (the only one I remember)

"Gran Souleu de la Prouvenco!"

may perhaps shadow forth the emotion that he by indirection excited in me better than anything I could myself manufacture. No man of those times, witch-ridden by the clever, cared to think of anything so obvious or so inevitable. "Great sun of Provence!" Like encountering Goethe, did I say? It was like knowing Chaucer, mirth, health, strength. Since that brief afternoon, whatever my own deficiencies, I have never been able to get up much sympathy for decadents, however greatly they stand in need of it. The other kind are much too exciting. I submit that to cross that path was a

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good thing in the twentieth year. He was seventy then. But I discovered in five minutes that the genuine calm of a man who had made something was a great deal more interesting than the factitious hysteria of people who had not.

I am sure that merely running across the bows of that beautiful figure was more important than several "lost" Sophomore years.

❧ VI ❧

ANNUS MIRABILIS

1

MY YEAR of wonders, not all pleasant ones, was the twelve-month between July, 1909, and July, 1910. As far as I was concerned there was hardly a moment when the unpredictable was not confidently to be expected, in spite of several long bouts of lassitude and hope deferred. My habit of existence was violently altered three times. And actual adventure and, to me, startling experience crowded the days.

Like most young Americans I had arrived at the crisis intrinsic in the possession of a sheepskin, without quite knowing a crisis was there. The formal process of education, however incomplete, stops as suddenly as if it had been killed. There is no longer a place for you in the cordial regions that were once so pleasant. The fact that one has given little thought to the emergency in no way improves the situation. In defense of myself, it is fair to say that my definite object in life was more definite than that of most young men. My ambition was crystal clear. I knew I wanted to write poetry and nothing but poetry. But in the light of the new situation, it was hard to find a warrant for such a hope in the record of achievement. Nor would the world see

much in a few poems in the *Lit*, whose exquisite badness their author was beginning faintly and uncomfortably to perceive. I still think that one of those lonely and imperfect experiments had fire. But though fire is essential, it isn't enough. And yet it was beyond my powers to give up that ambition, which, if I had known, was its real justification. Nervously I cast about for devices to tide me over a time of bewilderment, and, like hundreds of other young men who don't know what to do, hit on a dubious plan of prolonging my studies in the graduate school. This had the merit of keeping up appearances, but in my case, as in many others, amounted to a flight from the enigma. In fact it is always a silly thing to do, unless one is absolutely burned up with interest in a definite problem that advanced studies can actually help to solve. For the moment, self-deluded, I persuaded myself that I was in the proper state of mind. And I actually excogitated what still seems to me a not unreasonable task to work on, namely, a critical study of past and present Utopias. Books not without interest have been written on this subject, but there is still plenty of room at the top, and from the hand of someone who was honestly excited, something fruitful might have been expected. For a while I really believed in it, but the only real value of the scheme was that, for a few months, it decently covered the nakedness of the future. And happily there was going to be a blessed interim, for before undertaking to write the last word on the history of political ideals, I was to go down with my father to visit his enterprises in Central America.

It has been pointed out by innumerable moralists that men seldom know what they are doing. For all his acuteness of intellect, my father certainly did not when he went on that strange adventure, which for twenty years made havoc of his fine energies and repaid him only in dividends of that sort of excitement which one does not welcome. The effects remain to this day and no one can tell me anything about

being land-poor. Twenty-five thousand hectares of howling wilderness modify one's views about great possessions. The one satisfaction I have derived from that monstrous tract is a distinction unique and my own. I venture to believe that no poet in history, good, bad, or indifferent, has ever owned as many boa-constrictors as I may be said at this writing to possess.

The little company had started with a bang as a rubber plantation ancillary to a small factory in New York. The unpredictable always happens in the Tropics, and in our case it took the form of a tornado. Just as the trees arrived at maturity and were fit to be tapped, a storm no more than ten miles across came along and with almost personal malignity broke every tree short off three feet from the ground. Unmolested they would have recovered, but between Cancer and Capricorn nothing that is injured is unmolested. The lovely tattacu, the moon-flower of Californian gardens, did the plantation's business. The huge carpet of irresistible vines studded with purple cups overwhelmed our unhappy stumps which could not thrust up a spike of leaf from under the smothering strangling creepers. One could hardly blame our directors for failing to admire as beautiful a sight as eye ever saw. It was to deal with this emergency that my father, rich in devices, revisited that luckless coast.

I submit that to get one's glimpse of the Tropics at twenty-two with such a companion is a thing beyond estimation. Every facet of the experience gleams for me still with no ordinary light. New Orleans, least American of our cities, fascinated me, as it has fascinated everyone (for choice William McFee), who has ever been there. The wet heat, the food seasoned with invisible fire, Stag gin-fizzes, little French bookstores in whose show-windows Parisian successes of ten years before grew dingy under the same dust that sullied the complete works of St. Thomas Aquinas, the quadruple roar of Canal Street, sunset over Lake Ponchartrain, and the

rampart, mobile but perpetual, of vertical white cloud that surrounds the city, all these were a sort of introduction to a world even less familiar.

Leaving that city of pleasant manners and a French wholly incomprehensible, on a steamer of nine hundred tons, was like going to sea in a Kipling story. The little Norwegian tramp, leased for two years to a fly-by-night banana company and so pretending to be an honest ship with a house flag and marriage lines, was a ringer for the *Rathmines* of that splendid fantasy, "A Matter of Fact." Officered and manned by one Stavanger family, the *Imperator* had no man in her crew farther off in blood from the captain than nephew or cousin. This custom it appears was common in Scandinavian ships at the time and explains why they had the best pickings in the Caribbean. I liked that gang of square-heads. They had been in every honest-to-God port in the world and some not so honest. And they now were transporting us to one of the latter category.

The voyage down to Bluefields through the Yucatan Passage was uncomfortable, but mitigated by other considerations. I learned to ignore cockroaches which scuttled deep into the berth when one turned back the sheet, and, as the steward said, did not bite but only tickled. The cramped quarters and detestable food were literally forgotten when one looked at

*Flying fish about our bows,
Flying sea-fire in our wake.*

And the brilliant breakers, green shoal water, and blue-purple deep, off Cape Antonio were beauty memorable as pain.

There is more than a little truth in the commonplace that one describes best what one has not seen. The passages in which Charles Kingsley, with his Schomburgk at his elbow, hit off the imagined forests of the Venezuela Coast and the

Orinoco, are miracles of veracity because they are imagined. Bram Stoker was once complimented on the local color in *Dracula*. Venice was the nearest to Hungary that he ever got. I myself have heard pleasant things said about the realistic background of a tale laid in the Orient, by veterans of Mesopotamia and explorers of the Pamir. All of which is intended as an alibi, in case I should forget myself and attempt to render what these eyes saw. The reader has been honorably warned.

After three days of that indescribable sea we came up to Cape Gracias á Dios, Columbus' first landfall on the terra firma, and anchored in the spearhead of mud at the mouth of the dirty Wanks River to discharge some of our cargo. Pitpans, dugouts of mahogany sometimes forty feet long, came alongside, and it was hard to believe that the low-type Mongols who paddled them were Indians. Cape Gracias was, is, and always will be a poor preface to the South. The low shores, the mangroves, the unhealed look of the mud banks that seem to need a scab which never forms, the corrugated iron warehouses, even the life of the polluted sea which took the form of the shovel-nosed shark, a creature like a streamlined slop-jar, all these details made up a picture of the essence of natural and acquired meanness. I never was gladder than when anchors were aweigh and we moved on clean and beautiful waters. As if to indemnify us for that stinking interlude, the gods put on a sunset that night like a dagger dance of fire, which of course vanished almost "as quickly as the color dies from the side of a captured salmon." Coleridge never visited those latitudes, and his famous description is a glorious example of the advantage of not having seen a thing, as also of the disadvantage. For not even Coleridge in his *annus mirabilis* imagined such tremendous effects as the turreted sunsets of the tropics, where, at least in my experience, the dark does not come at one stride. Instead there is a gorgeous brief interval of castellated fires on the skyscraper

clouds, and you are left mourning. That particular display on the night before we made Bluefields got after a fashion into a poem of mine fourteen years later, and, whether or no the account of it strikes home to the reader, what called it forth has for me such permanence as is possible in individual existence. Also there was a strange sequel, for no sooner had full darkness taken hold than the sea was alive with phosphorescence, as if comets had been drowned all over it, or Berenice were drawing her celestial hair through the dark waters.

Late next afternoon we stole across the bar at the mouth of Bluefields lagoon and disembarked at the Bluff whence we were to go by motor-boat to a mean city. What with customs and medical inspection we strangled a couple of hours on the dilapidated dock, where a company of a barefooted army were drilling dejectedly and in a manner that convinced me that not one of them had seen a Mauser rifle before. If I had understood, it was a portent. As darkness fell our launch sputtered and gasped across the lagoon toward the lights of Bluefields. While we were yet hundreds of yards away I could hear the air shake with the roar of approaching or departing electric trains. The racket was like being in a subway. It was deafening by the time we reached the dock. And I found it hard to believe that that overwhelming metallic clamor was produced by tiny creatures a couple of inches long, clinging with prehensile toes to every cornice and bough. One could not fail to remember

*The still lagoon and the moon beyond,
And the tree-toad chorus drowning all,
And the lisp of the split banana-frond
That sang us to sleep when we were small.*

There are better hotels than "El Tropical." But four days on the *Imperator* do not make a man exigent. I slept as Saturn's steadfast shade sleeps on his luminous ring.

We were up before dawn to visit the plantation eighteen miles away among the lagoons of the Escondido. And that was the first rapture, and as fine and careless as need be. The launch waited for us in the mist by a warehouse whose piles were sheathed in brass against the teredo. We crossed the lagoon with the skipjacks scaling out of the water at our prow like thrown playing-cards, from mere excitement or because the big gars were after them. Suddenly in the twinkling of an eye we were in narrow channels. The sun rose and his earliest red fires touched a clump of great trees, which instantly were transformed into five one hundred and fifty foot sand-violets. The metaphor is hardly fanciful, for the sallow trunk of the ibo has the anemic tintless look of a violet stem, and the great crown of petals, thirty yards in diameter, is almost exactly the color of the flowers that grow in New England sand-barrens and railway-cuts. One might have compared their huge mass to a flowery Santa Sophia or Taj. They were fully as big and much more glorious. And I suppose the ibo-tree is the largest living thing in the world that is beautiful for radiant color. There was not a green leaf, only the unbroken cloud of soft mauve, whose outlines had a curve as successful as the ribs of Brunelleschi's dome, the whole strangely emphasized by the red sunrise, as colors in a laboratory are emphasized by the mysterious lamps of the physicist.

As we went on the channel narrowed. The bush rose on either hand, a solid green wall thirty feet high. Few inches of it were dull. Kingsley speaks somewhere of a single tree in Venezuela "with more life in it than an acre of English ground." One felt breath and pulsation behind every leaf. And color was hot against your eyes. The flora maria let fall its golden veil, as wild azalea does over the banks of a South County trout-stream. Red orchids a foot across gleamed like stop-lights in the crotch of a tree. Alligators floated in the wider bayous. And I beheld alive and free wholly improba-

ble toucans against the sky on a high bough, that opened and shut beaks almost as long as their bodies, with a noise between the clang of a safe-door and the screech of ungreased hinges. From the lower limbs of a ceiba-tree in an abandoned potrero hung innumerable gray stockings, nests of the bellbird, image of the orchard oriole, but as big as a pheasant. And creatures coal-black and scarlet, or blue and crimson, or green as jealousy, might flutter before you at every turn, while overhead circled the magnificent white snakehawks, birds so convinced of the virtue of personal privacy that I never saw one at a range closer than a hundred yards. Those great things still seem to me the epitome of beauty and dignity, and they are what eagles would be, if eagles had aesthetic sense or nobility of nature.

Horses awaited us at a pier thrust out from the devouring bush, which gave me a better idea of how man's work decays than any structure made with hands I had yet seen. Thence we rode up a trail of squashy mud between ramparts of bush yet higher than we had discovered along the Escondido. On the east coast of Nicaragua a necessary distinction is drawn between "low bush" which is thirty feet high, and "high bush" which is not less than sixty. They are about equally impervious. I know from experience that Br'er Rabbit's briar-patch is a royal road compared with the least thicket of the Nicaraguan east coast. And to this day I look with contempt on the green thorn of the Queen's River, which is the terror of effeminate fly-casters from the decadent reaches of the Beaverville. The heat-stimulated barbed-wire vegetation of those tropic flats is something at which to shudder. Had we desired to leave the trail, we could not have made a hundred feet in an hour without machetes, and hardly more with the cold iron in our hands. In the midst of that wilderness one had to stick to the worn groove like any clerk in Maiden Lane. And after fifteen minutes in the desolation, one already felt cribbed, cabined, and confined,

condemned to a track. Presently I felt my tick-eaten plug's off forefoot give under both of us. I looked down. A red mouth, wide open, the jaws three inches long, was gnawing awkwardly at my beast's pastern. It was a land-alligator, on which the horse had casually trodden in the mud. The scarlet mouth of the poor creature, twisting in agony under the weight, was like a symbol of Central America, helpless under the burden of changes which it neither desired nor could combat. Anywhere else in the world that wretched nag would have jumped sky-high, for it is the nature of horses to hate stepping on anything living, but here it appeared stepping on things was a commonplace. Four or five hundred yards farther on, our guide suddenly reined in and said: "That's nice, isn't it?" Before us five or six banana trees, last relic of a dead plantation, crowned a hillock. A single frond of one of them was depressed sidewise from what even I would have known to be its normal angle into a position close to the trail. "Hope we won't be riding by when that comes down," said the guide. The branch of the great plantain was visibly strained to breaking-point by the weight of a mud-wasp's nest nearly four feet long, quite a foot wide, and almost as thick. With my own eyes I saw the three-inch hornets entering and departing from their precarious palace every second, while we plodded past. The man on horseback who by ill luck should be where we were, when that imminent collapse took place, would not last a second longer than he would in front of a Lewis gun. I saw and I understood that the policy of King Agag, who walked delicately, might be of no more use in this land than it was to Agag. It ought to be noticed that there is no bright face to danger in Nicaragua, whose specialty it is to give no warning.

From the crest of a low hill we saw an immense clearing walled by great trees, and in the midst of it a group of what had once been neat buildings. It had hardly seemed worth

while to keep them up since the tornado had passed over our hope. But they were home to my father and me for the rest of the summer, and we extemporized a mad sort of life in them, full of surprises, and diverting or alarming as the case might be. Thus, for instance, after a hard morning's walk of four or five miles at a temperature of 96 degrees Fahrenheit, also having been scared out of ten years' growth when a large snake, by all the laws of probability a fer-de-lance, ran over your instep with enough deliberation for you to feel the weight, it was not unnatural to follow the custom of the country and take a siesta after luncheon. A yell like that once uttered by the old monk of Siberia shattered the soft warm calm. Snatching a rifle from the wall, one leaped out of one's skin, to discover Bean, once a New Hampshire farmer and now a nervous wreck as a result of coming face to face with a portentous but perfectly harmless boa only twenty feet long. I cannot and shall not forget that Yankee's ashen-faced horror. It was the first time I had seen naked fear complicated with supreme disgust, which I believe to be a characteristic experience of persons who for one reason or another happen to live in what are called the Tropics. I certainly felt it many times myself. And I think it is fair to ask which is predominant in those lands, beauty or horror. A foot or two below the flower that filled your soul with grace and unspeakable color, you may see the ghastliness of a toad a foot across, engaged in swallowing with dreadful ingurgitation another almost as big as himself. That particular spectacle, accidentally discovered by lantern-light, impressed itself on my mind as the essence of what I should prefer not to see. The disquieting, slow-motion, reptilian meal, ugliness devouring ugliness, troubled me for days afterwards. And when I read the *Divine Comedy*, and, in the twenty-fourth canto of the *Inferno*, stumbled on what happened to Vanno Fucci, stricken by his fellow-serpent, I remembered disgusting analogies. Such

things, trivial as they may appear, have a way of not retreating from one's nightmares. It would be all right with me never to have imagined such a sight, let alone to have seen it.

On an adjoining plantation, as down-at-heel and ruinous as our own, there was a gross Canadian Boer War veteran, who was always talking of the Paardeberg dinner in Toronto, and was obviously in Nicaragua because his people couldn't stand him in Ontario. It was hard to take him on the Mosquito Coast, in spite of his yarns about the fifteen-hundred-mile ride in pursuit of De Wet who got away. But he did organize a tapir-hunt for which I have reason to be grateful. The tapir is a mild pachyderm, perfectly harmless and inoffensive, but he weighs up to nine hundred pounds, and properly wounded can get through undergrowth with sufficient velocity to trample you effectively before you can dodge. I was provided with a guide and a thirty-twenty rifle, about as useless a weapon against our destined quarry, whose hide is two inches thick, as could be imagined by an expert on ballistics. But that bootless chase had something great in it, for I had the opportunity, denied to most, of actually encountering and making friends with Mowgli, and, if it comes to that, Candide and the Ingenu. The creature who led me through the bush for an entire morning proved to be natural man, ignorant of complexes and unacquainted with taboos. He was as uninstructed and "as decent as a nice dog." The son of a cashiered English naval officer, he and his younger brother had been abandoned in the Escondido bush by a man who had once held the King's commission. Their sole possessions were a wrecked plantation house, a couple of machetes, a smooth-bore muzzle-loader, and, if I remember, a copy of the *Three Musketeers*, which by some miracle they were able to read. They were as diffident as woodchucks, and as responsive to the faintest courtesy or kindness as gentle creatures ordinarily are. Philip's eyes had

the alert but confiding look of an attractive animal, and one could not help liking him, even though he had to be told that certain necessary acts were not performed when women were present. He was profoundly grateful for the information. To be guided by such a person through as wild woods as there are on the planet, was like being taken through the Louvre by Rodin. Clumsily I followed him as he dodged around impassable barriers of plantain and briar, till presently we came into a region that looked like Gustav Doré's illustrations to *Atala*. In those cathedral aisles from whose cornices hung hundred-foot liana-cables, one could walk erect through the shadows in the very heart of the forest. The hackneyed metaphor is not idle, for it really felt like slipping through a vast ventricular passage in an enormous living cardiac structure. It was some 96 degrees in that humid Broceliande and we marched in it for miles. I felt pretty well pumped, and in no humor for what struck me as ill-considered not to say barbarous irony, when Philip asked me if I was thirsty. I replied bitterly that I was and be damned to him. Without a word he clove an inch-thick liana, whence flowed as from a tap, water as warm as blood but at that moment delicious beyond all liquors. He was careful to show me the pith of that strange vine, because there is another liana in those woods whence the inexperienced from time to time drink their last. We found no tapir. It was much better to discover Philip, familiar of the forest. He knew it as a cop or a newsboy knows his beat. Here he had seen a black panther. There he had killed an eighteen-foot boa. "How?" I asked. "Went up to him and cut his head off." "Weren't you afraid?" "No, it's the little snakes I'm afraid of." Philip was literally what the German Romantics called a *schöne seele*. And I wish that I had not, through a natural but inexcusable error, lost track of him. When I last heard from Mowgli-l'Ingenu twenty-eight years ago, he was working in Detroit for Henry Ford. Did he disappear into

that remarkable army of motor-mechanics who keep America moving toward what? Or is he the executive head of a department, who, looking up from a pile of heavy-dope correspondence, lets his mind wander to lost lagoons and forlorn jungles? In either case he would know aspects of existence unfamiliar to his associates. I celebrated him in a poem, to which no one paid attention, but which, on his account, means more to me than it could to any reader.

*Where the lobster-clawed fronds of the great plantains flush,
Trots little brown Philip, my Pan of the Bush,
Where the tattacu wreathes, where the ibo-petals fall.*

Everyone who has ever lived in Bush is aware of the strange psychological effects which are directly caused by the monstrous overwhelming life about one. The column of marching ants, a huge veil of black chantilly lace darkening the ground, the tarantula as big as a kitten descending a cane with hateful deliberation, the great quash dashing under your horse's nose with the worst possible effect on your mount's already troubled state of mind, the bloated ticks in that same horse's ears, and the turkey buzzards literally "gorged till they could not fly" on the remains of one of our steers, were characteristic notes in a most undomestic symphony. But apart from all this novelty of outer experience, with its corresponding inner interest or disgust, Nicaragua provided me with the excitement of political tension and impending change. Every week when I went down to Bluefields over Sunday I saw, or rather felt, how the tide was setting. American warships hovered off the coast and their crews came ashore to play baseball with the natives. The little city was seething with rumor. And there wasn't a half-breed child who did not know that Estrada the Governor was merely waiting for the moment to revolt from the hateful dictator Zelaya. That brute could teach Stalin something, for he had invented cayenne pepper injections to

facilitate the collection of taxes. Arms were being run in, I gathered. And conspiratorial groups looked professionally mysterious in the bar of "El Tropical," where Lacy, a linguistic genius with curly mustaches, "dispensed cocktails in six languages" to the Richard Harding Davis—O. Henry multitude of camp-followers of fortune. Nearly every man in the room had O. Henry's reason to approve of Nicaragua's historic aversion to extradition treaties.

I valued Lacy, because of his yarns about sixty-foot ancondas in Amazonia and the dubious heroisms of the Battle of Caledonia Bridge. But it took more than his free-hand revisions of fact to dissipate the boredom of a town where something was supposed to happen but never did, which is the formula for perfect ennui. I discovered alleviations. There was an interesting and philosophical doctor, in whose cool rooms I read a great part of Calmette's remarkable work on snakes and their venom, a subject of burning practical interest. An amiable and cultivated Castilian from the interior, then a clerk in a warehouse, asked me many questions concerning the history and psychology of the Colossus of the North. I hope he didn't take too much stock in my answers, for I am sure that my imaginative development of the American scene would hardly serve the purpose of a man who three years later was President of his country. He must have been in the very heart of the conspiracy whose rumor troubled the barrooms.

As if to keep the political balance even, I met one of the loathesome dictator's fifty loathesome sons, easily the most unattractive mongrel I have ever sat in the same room with. The gross-minded, mahogany-colored toad of a man was married to an American girl, visibly no great shakes herself, and quite as visibly in mortal terror of him. She was a real object of pity. At the moment her husband, prince of the worst blood in history, was threatening to be ambassador to Great Britain, a humiliation spared to the Court of St.

James when the Revolution burst like the boil it was. I suppose young Zelaya was merely a moron. And it is fair to admit that he was a musical virtuoso. But the man who should have gone ambassador to London did not "go good" at the piano on the Keith-Orpheum circuit. A year later I saw posters announcing him on hoardings in San Francisco, but did not look him up, not feeling it necessary to commiserate with fallen greatness so hateful in its nature.

September came, the behavior of the Revolution seemed to be modeled on that of Lancelot as described by the Lady of Shalott, and the maw of the Yale Graduate School gaped for me. I departed from the scrawny, tin-roofed town, with my head full of images I never have lost, in search of others I never could find.

2

My connection with the Yale Graduate School reminds me of Balfour's stricture on the story of mankind: "A brief and discreditable episode in the history of a minor planet." Whatever interest I may initially have felt in the biology and ecology of Utopias had vanished in the burning bush of the Escondido, between the fiery flowers and the birds more fiery still. Languidly I turned the pages of Plato, More, Hobbes, Bacon, Campanella, Harrington, Fourier, and Cabet, but the original glamour was shrunk to the exiguous and futile notes for a thesis, in which my heart no longer was. Professor Hocking, whose course in "Theories of the State" I had entered because I had foreseen he would anatomize my subject, was unable, for all his brilliance and charm, to make me like anything connected with such matters except him. The myriad-minded Charles Bennett himself could not interrupt intellectually my hibernation. Mechanically I leafed over the documents and more and more found myself dissipating mildly at Mory's and generally

avoiding anything that looked like mental exercise or discipline. Given such an attitude nothing could be very important and I drifted into a windless sea.

Part of my lassitude may have been due to that unhappy relation of which I have spoken, a relation whose past had been hard sledding, whose present was impossible, and which could have no future. But I think most of it was caused by mere cussedness and bewilderment. I was not wholly inactive, for I got together some of my verses in a little volume, thank God never openly published, and whose appearance, no matter how privately printed, I should now deplore, were it not that it changed my fate in a manner none could have predicted, and I should be the last to regret.

The book, which I called *The Scranne! Pipe* was a mixture of imitativeness, pedantry, and glibness. The food it had fed on was miscellaneous literature rather than the actuality and imagination that make the body and bone of poetry. For some reason I have always had a special, almost magnetic, inclination toward eastern Europe and the Near East, ever since Longfellow's "Scanderbeg" set up some induced excitement in the mind of a boy of eleven. That interest was given room and verge enough in that first thin volume. Whatever I had found in Gibbon, Finlay, Diehl, and the brilliant, journalese, Byzantine romances of Paul Adam came home to roost with a vengeance. And this accounts for, but hardly excuses, poems about Leo the Isaurian and Heraclius the Great. That I should fail to put flesh back on those dry-bones of Lower-Empire history is not surprising. But I am not ashamed of the boyish emotion that got canalized in that unpromising system of Levantine ditches. There was something real behind it, even if not one reader in a hundred (if there were a hundred) knew, as I knew, why there was some point when Nicephorus I at the moment of his execution made an ironic remark to the spirit of the Empress Irene. It takes one a long time to dis-

cover that people neither know nor care what you are talking about. But I consider that I was an unlucky child to have worked my way into a region where I was bound to be lonely and where my epitaph could easily have been:

"Mort pour l'empire romaine, la decadence."

A quite unforeseen decadence came with the rapidity and unexpectedness of a car-collision. One great cause of brain-fag is underwork. And toward the end of 1909, I put on a first-rate imitation of a nervous breakdown. Mild irregularity, a little too much alcohol, a little too much disillusion and disappointment, a sick fore-knowledge that what I might have to say about Utopias was unlikely to rustle any Volscian in any Corioli, combined to produce the dreadful "neck-prickling" sense of fatigue and incapacity for anything, that Kipling has more than once described with the pathos of those who know. To this day I remember the fear and horror I felt when it dawned on me that no effort of my will could enable me to extract the not too difficult meaning from the sprawling sentences of Harrington's *Oceana*. At this moment I hate that wholly innocent and completely unimportant work. Flight was the only hope. A week or two later I descended from a transcontinental express at Big Timber in Montana, to see if I could pull myself together as chore-boy on a ranch twenty miles from a railway.

3

It was the end of January when I arrived, in the midst of one of those pulsations of unexpected warmth which are characteristic of winter in the Northwest. There was no snow whatever except on the higher peaks. The plain was the color of the Assyrian Lion's hide, and the mountains, bating their blinding summits, were cobalt or turquoise, depending on light and distance. Hugeness and high visi-

bility were and are main characteristics of that land. And each emphasized the other. To detect a man three stricken miles away with the naked eye makes anyone who has lived in the vaporous atmosphere of misty New England coasts feel almost guilty, as if of spying. For all the enormous emptiness of the plain it is as if there were no privacy. And I am quite certain that I was once caught red-handed, or better red-armed, by interested persons at farther than a rifle shot, locked in a close embrace with a young lady. In our innocence we had believed ourselves quite safe from prying eyes. It is almost shocking to discover that a tree one proposed as the goal of a half-hour walk is ten miles away. And the ineffable slowness of progress toward the enormous horizons enlarged the distances. Five miles an hour when you have twenty-five miles to go, up-hill if you knew it, makes one feel weak and snailish. Nor had the automobile yet thrust into the country of the saddle and the spur. But like Nicaragua it was a land to eat with your eyes. The wind-eroded crags, like stone lace-work in flamboyant churches, the yard-high curlews walking in the wild hay, the coyote watching us with interest but discretion, a virtuoso of a sunset behind the snowflags of the Crazy Mountains, whose foothills were "like the paws of sphinxes" at the door of the ranch, and Comet A 1910, a golden feather in the western sky, have not left me unmindful.

Harry Hart, my employer-host, always unfailingly kind to me, together with his brother Jack, ran five hundred red steers on three thousand acres of flat land and butte, with great mountains on three sides and a wine-dark sea of purple-shadowed bad lands on the fourth. The brothers were English and had come into the country thirty years before with nothing but fine natures and that disposition to put one's back into it, which seems increasingly outside of contemporary theories of conduct. Two better fellows could not be. I was immediately put to work very hard with

beneficial effects, which were visible almost at once. Incidentally three days after my arrival, Harry hurt himself badly in a fall, with the result that for six weeks I knew what it meant to bear burdens in a house without running water. One's views of coal, kerosene, firewood and water-pails in general depend on whether one has to carry them or no. I hope my servants know that I know. By nightfall mere physical fatigue had reduced me to a state which I can recommend on therapeutic grounds, but which no one can wholly enjoy. But I forgot entirely the weariness which had troubled my mind so called, because of the mere gravitational drag on my loins and hams. I hold no brief for the unnecessary expenditure of elbow-grease. And I have no doubt that a little thought would have diminished our sweat. But there was no time for new devices, not with a blizzard blowing straight lines of ice into one's face, as one staggered across the corral to feed the horses in "the ammoniated dark" of the stable, or to get in enough wood and coal to fortify the cabin against the malignity of the inhuman cold. For cold it could be, and the softly reared should once in a way learn what it feels like when the sweat freezes, and icicles form at the nostrils.

I do not wish to convey that it was all like that. As I have said before, there is a strange pulsation in Montana weather. After a breathless struggle not to die of the mere agony for a week or more, when the wicked atmosphere clenched you in its fist, there would come a still morning with a high, grey, unpromising sky. Harry at the cabin door would squint at the somber clouds and say: "It's chinooking." In another hour the thermometer would have risen from below zero to nearly fifty, and the snow by sundown would be whipped off like a table-cloth. Blue pools lay in every depression of the plain. And the white jackrabbits, unaware that they were now the most conspicuous objects in the landscape, crouched quiet till you came within a yard of them—

a hateful betrayal on the part of the Ancient Mother. I have never felt anything like the Chinook wind. The sense of physical well-being induced by a temperature change for the better of fifty degrees is so pleasant as to have almost aphrodisiac effects. It is like being kissed all over by a competent artist. The savage changes in deserts like the Mojave go too rapidly from extreme to extreme. But in the Montana Upland a lesser alteration brings with it a sort of euphoria which is like the effect of a delightful drug. And no drug I know can compare with that innocent hashish.

Of course, the routine of such life can become trying, but it never did for me, possibly because I wasn't there long enough. The people were fantastically hospitable, what there were of them. Twenty miles on horseback were what five would be to the English-tailored cavaliers of the East, and a man thought nothing of riding half a day for a snack and a chat. Everyone was interested in you, and you found yourself with perfect naturalness repaying the compliment. This makes for pleasant social relations. I should not have believed that three days of blizzard-blockade with total strangers would be something to remember as quite incomparably agreeable. I was sorry when the decreasing storm permitted me to depart from Tom Blakeman's delightful roof. There have been cold afternoons in Montana as well as the hot ones celebrated by the poet.

One picture of that time, I must, however ineptly, endeavor to paint. It is something to have fed steers at the end of a biting February day in the darkened light that falls across the world when prismatic sun-dogs come above the mountains. The metal-green alfalfa falls in a lengthening trail on the white snow. The hungry red steers follow with tossing horns, bellowing as they come, and one must not let the wagon stop moving at all, or they will trample each other in a general *mêlée*. The red beasts, the green hay, the field of dead-white snow under a gloomy sky with fiery

clefts in it, have stayed in my head twenty years as something to shoot at, for the life and death one could see or feel, whether it could ever be gotten on paper or no.

Harry's accident which made me a hewer of wood, a drawer of water, and in a mild way a herdsman, had another pleasing consequence, for it brought me Rivers Browne, who came to help with the ranch work. A man of high breeding and instinctive delicacy, he had been a cowboy for twenty years and had carried horsemanship to a point where, not merely an art, it was a philosophy. Every bone in his body had been broken by some sixty kicks and other catastrophes. And like the Maltese Cat he was lame all round, but desperately quick on his feet. To see him get on a bad actor, whether timid or vicious, was to witness the extreme of virtuosity. I have known no other man and only one woman who was fit to hold a candle to him. The remarkable Mrs. Hunt of the Ojai might fairly lay claim to an equal understanding of horses. In his youth in the early nineties Browne had been horse-wrangler to many caval-lardas coming up from Mexico with the longhorns purchased on the border. The duties of the son of an English general had consisted in breaking wild horses caught on the long march—so that the vaqueros might ride them. With such a job there was no middle way. Either one died or one became an artist. Browne chose to become an artist. His mind was eager and charming. Like all men who have been lonely in cabins a day's ride from the nearest neighbor, he read voraciously, and his talk, illuminated by vivid experience and highly intelligent judgment on books and men, was as fresh, direct, and delightful as it is possible for talk to be. Years afterward he and I collaborated on a couple of western ballads, which I supposed were take-offs of Service's ineptitudes. I must have been mistaken in this estimate, for one of those tongue-in-cheek jeux d'esprit was betrayed into a serious anthology and now masquerades as an honest woman

and a sincere contribution to the literature of the frontier. One never knows.

Browne's subsequent career has not been without interest. He worked for us in Nicaragua, and, by lying about his age to certain obtuse British officials, managed to wangle two years on the Ypres front. I hope he is still enjoying those apple-trees in British Columbia, which he planted against old age.

When the windflowers came, I was completely restored in health, stronger than I had ever been in my life, and quite aware that the future was still an enigmatic blank. Nothing would have pleased me better than to idle for a while, but that was not in my father's program. I said farewell to Montana and found myself secretary and assistant to the manager of a plantation in Alabama, where the hours were strictly from sun to sun, and what amusement there was, was of my own providing.

The work had the merit of being varied. A morning with business letters and reports would be succeeded by an afternoon during which I bossed the hoe-gang or spurred on squads of axemen racing each other to see who could bring down their particular loblolly pine first, preferably on top of a defeated squad. Africa enjoys practical jokes of this description, and it was a sight to see their black faces blazing with mirth, as they leaped aside from the falling tree at the last possible second.

The plantation, about four thousand acres, of which eleven hundred were under the plow, lay along the Alabama river in the very center of the state and the heart of the Black Belt. We were almost as far out of the world as I had been in the Northwest, twelve miles from the railway and telegraph. And I helped build the telephone that connected our far-flung posts of command with my own hands.

Life, in spite of work not wholly congenial to me, was frequently diverting and always simple. The essentials were

in the open. Riding past the house of our bookkeeper, I would see the gentle old creature, who had killed his man, smoking his pipe while with mild deliberation he wrung the neck of a chicken for supper. People moved softly and spoke quietly, but for some reason men were apt to go armed. I followed the fashion, though I never found occasion to use a weapon, and once was highly embarrassed when an automatic fell out of my pocket in the smoking-compartment of a local train. I need have felt no shyness. Every man in that smoker, except for a horrified northern drummer, produced a pistol as if to show me that my mishap could happen to anyone.

I found my neighbors white and black about equally amusing. And I had little trouble on a point I had been anxious about, managing labor. I need not have been, for black labor is the easiest and friendliest in the world. Our men were, by contrast with plantations I knew about, getting a very good break, and in the main showed their appreciation. I found that they reacted with complete spontaneity to ordinary courtesy and kindness. Once or twice firmness, which is abhorrent to my nature, became a prime necessity. And once I beat a boy of eighteen *coram publico* with my belt. It made my innards turn green. And my abolitionist great-grandfather must have rolled over in his grave during the half-minute, while I went Simon Legree. But it had to be done. Done it was, and my abolitionist great-grandfather would have done it too. Nor shall I forget the laughter of the blameless Ethiopians as the lash descended on the back of Mose who had asked for it. I couldn't laugh, but it was better than taking the case to the star-chamber. Nevertheless there is nothing more hateful than striking a man who deserves it. I had no further trouble.

A great part of our cotton grew on a great, simmering, fenceless, three-hundred-acre flat of bottom-land, which was so close to flood level as to make cultivation a worse bet than

usual. It was no fun for us to hear that there were storms on the headwaters and to watch the river visibly climb under a cloudless sky. Overseeing is a dull business when, in Rimbaud's phrase, the hammers of July shatter the Heavens. But one must be there, or Africa will lose interest and perhaps get into fights inspired by Eros, or for a mere point of prestige. I spent many days from sunrise to sunset in that blazing desert of cotton, but I liked my gangs from the first, particularly when about three-thirty in the afternoon they lifted antiphonally their voices like smitten bronze. That strange extempore music when conversation might be carried on in a duet for five minutes at a time across the vast field, or when the whole outfit chanted together queerly transmogrified passages of scripture, struck me as often more spontaneously beautiful than the legitimate "Spirituals," lovely as they are. It is a good sign too, for it means they are happy and is by way of being an implied compliment to the overseer. I am glad to say that I heard it every time I took out a gang for the day. It was an odd accompaniment to Keats, whom I read through amid the alien cotton, looking up from "Endymion" from time to time to correct the more obvious departures into immorality.

There was some fun I did not make for myself, for instance the excitement of a barbecue, when the half-wild swine were run down and a three-hundred-pound boar was dog-wrestled, squealing with frightfully intelligent despair, by remorseless negroes, one to each leg. The exquisite pleasure that everyone white or black took in the meat had a touch of the Biblical and the Homeric, as though the Lord had made their faces to shine. Such delightful animal satisfaction is not seen among connoisseurs at more elegant banquets. And the joke seems to me to be on Lucullus.

At such feasts I came to know a little about my neighbors, whose courtesy was as colossal as their ignorance. Pleasanter people are not to be found. But until the South finds some

way of getting its pleasant people to use minds certainly not by nature inferior to Northern intellects, that beautiful and fruitful country is going to remain dull, poverty-struck, and certain that its troubles are the fault of someone else. There was just one person in the region who was addicted to thought—an old lady, precisely like the cultivated wife of a Boston brahmin. Her fortune had vanished in 1865. And the opera in New Orleans and the Greek she had once known were, I fancy, alike pretty hazy memories. For forty-five years she had lived in a wretched excuse for a plantation house and had worn just such clothes as her cook. Her face was vivid with intelligence and her speech like crystal. For herself, I don't think she cared, but no philosophy was proof against the pain of seeing her grandsons getting every hour farther from things she valued and nearer to the poor white. And in fact some years later she killed herself in some horrible moment of despair.

Feuds were quieting down in my time, though only a few years before several men had been killed in an adjoining village, because, as in John Hay's "Ballad of the Whiskey-Sling," a man stumbled in a barroom. At the house of a neighbor, the mother of my hostess suddenly made, without the faintest provocation, a remark of such unnecessary rudeness at my expense, that I must have flushed. Anybody would have, but I saw my host's eyelid flicker. At the end of a meal punctuated by acerbities from the lips of that most unattractive old thing, he drew me aside. "'Tain't because you're from the North. It's because you're a man. Hates everything in pants. Her father was killed. Her husband was killed. Her two sons were killed. They won't kill her grandsons till they're eighteen, or maybe we can get it stopped. She thinks all men are killers." One hardly could blame her. But I have never encountered elsewhere discourtesy founded on that particular rock of offense.

The intellectual poverty of the South is no doubt con-

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nected with its bad economics, but of the two it is the greater evil. They hardly enjoy the free beauty of the land, and it is hard for a stranger to do so when native eyes are so dull. The trees, post-oak, water-oak, and pine, are glorious. Morning-glory and maypop are lovely flowers. Every creek cut deep in the red loam is a nest of sweetness. But no man regards them, and I have noticed that blindness with respect to natural beauty is apt to go with other blindness. My demands certainly are not exigent, but the absurd triviality of the conversation of both sexes took the cake. I hardly remember hearing, during that exile, one thing said by anybody, that hit off effectively a character or illuminated an idea. The vivid gnomic metaphor of New England, the picturesque fantasy of the Rocky Mountain states, belong to more fortunate moral climates. On the other hand such platitudes as central Alabama does utter are expressed in a better and purer English. And louts who never heard of Shakespeare speak his language, though never by any chance his thought. I nearly died of their bonehead speculations on the price of cotton and absolutely flatulent political opinions. When a really sweet-natured woman expresses in perfect sincerity the notion that "Abraham Lincoln was a ve'y bad man," what is there to do except to trepan her? In a time and place where a literal witch-hunt can happen every day (I myself have chased a voodoo-man half an afternoon, for the practice of his art is a penal offense and causes trouble in "the quarters"), it is not surprising if episodes like the Scottsboro trial shock and astound our complacency. It is fair to add that while that travesty was proceeding, only two hours' motor-ride from the Hall of Injustice, scientists as clear-minded as they come were isolating a new isotope. There may be hope in that.

Complete loneliness is a bad thing, and I knew it on the plantation. Not a soul knew or cared about anything that interested me. And though a motor mechanic may sympathize with men who can only handle a pick, he would like

ANNUS MIRABILIS

to see even a Model-T Ford now and then. That was my predicament, and it is a very bad one. It even showed in the perfectly wretched poetry I wrote at the time, fortunately suppressed by the author before any editor got a crack at it. But at any rate I encountered bitter self-criticism for the first time in this connection. And that was no dead loss.

Day after day went by with its routine dulness and routine excitement, and no iced tea, if there was no ice, which is hell with the thermometer at 104. It was late in July and about four in the afternoon when my boss rode down to me, where I ruled the cotton field in lone splendor. He handed me a telegram. I could not believe my eyes as I read. Out of a clear sky the University of California, which six months before had rejected my timid application for an instructorship, now offered it on what seemed to me terms of imperial generosity. I had just an hour to make the twelve miles to the nearest telegraph-office, which closed at five. But we had a fast mare, concerning whom I still think with respect. She got me to Burnsville in fifty-three minutes. I have been ninety miles an hour in motor-cars and God knows how fast in aeroplanes. But that ride against time on a muddy red road, where a car could hardly have crawled, still seems to me the symbol and essence of speed. She was a great creature and she was in foal too. But she merely seemed to feel the nervous irritability of pregnancy. I never even clucked at her, but she went *ventre-à-terre* the whole way. No veterinary obstetrician could have dealt with her more gently on the road back. Yet against my restraining hand we were home in an hour. She suffered no ill effects from twenty-four miles in less than two hours. And for her spirit and fire and the undulating ease of her long single-foot I would bless her name, if I remembered it.

Two weeks later I gazed at the faces of forty young men and women in a recitation-room in Berkeley and wondered what in the devil I could or was going to teach them. It was the end of the wonderful year.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

UNLIKE other western institutions the University of California had and has many imperfections. But this does not prevent it from being one of the really pleasant places of the planet. The ease, the simplicity, the friendliness, and the genuine distinction of many of the faculty more than made up for deficiencies it would take no genius to point out. I doubt if a more unlicked cub than I became a member of any teaching force in the land that year, and yet in spite of overwork for which I was under-equipped, I had a splendid time. Also I was from the first treated like a man and a brother. All of which goes to prove my statement that it is a pleasant place.

No university whatever is more beautiful for situation. Cardinal Newman himself, whose standards were notably high in this connection, could have picked no more suitable site. Set on the lower slope of the leonine hills that look out between the headlands of the Gate, near but not in the great city, it is sufficiently close to the main highway to the Orient so that all manner of men pass by and some pause to converse. Kipling has remarked that the lobby of the Palace Hotel is one of the four places in the world where sooner or later everyone of power or interest will appear. The observa-

tion is very nearly true. And a mere list of my own casual encounters at or near that focal point would have a certain piquancy. The university maelstrom sucked in men of distinction, who whirled in its eddies for a day or two before going to their own place, and though such connections are often unsatisfactory because brief, I am glad I had so many of them. Though near enough to reap the benefit, the university is yet sufficiently withdrawn and apart from the neighboring cities, to preserve, in spite of its astronomic enrolment, something of the air and a good deal of the spirit of honorable academic seclusion.

The noble place with its tremendous view of bay, mountains, and the "crocodile silhouette" of the city, which at night becomes a Wagnerian dragon, has been adorned not unfitly by man. Great groves of eucalyptus and acacia, in spite of the prejudice of old Californians, have taken nothing from the magnificence of the original secular live oaks, and have the further virtue of hiding certain buildings. Though some of these are fussy, feeble, or downright hideous, the Mining School seems to me a shining example of good architecture, and there are others nearly as effective. White stone and red tile fit well with the burnt khaki and dusty jade-greens of an arid land. And I do not share the views of purists whose sensibilities are hurt by a capital lacking a pilaster or a doorway too closely resembling the mouth of the Cloaca Maxima, when the general effect is on the whole appropriate and not without distinction. By and large John Galen Howard, his colleagues, and successors deserved well of the university. For all the modern eccentricities and the pitiful relics of Harvard Memorial Gothic that yet cumber the ground, I do not think of the place as less than striking.

When I got off the suburban train which bore me from the "Overland" to Berkeley, Tom Bacon, Professor of History and the most entertaining great-uncle known to sci-

ence, was there to welcome me, as always wagging his red beard, "that way he had." It seemed almost a dear ambition of his to get that hairy spike pointed horizontally out in front of him. It never descended vertically like reasonable beards. And in some manner it was an accessory to his penetrating and perpetually diverting conversation. Uncle Tom ("Tommy" to twenty-five college generations) was incapable of dulness, though he had been a clergyman. However, he had recovered from this, and, no longer feeling a vocation, had become a very good lecturer on history. A local simile for extreme contentment, current at this time, was, "As happy as Tommy Bacon when he got out of the ministry." His wit could be mordant and whether or no he feared God, he did not regard man. As toastmaster at a banquet, he remarked after an elaborate and terrifically extended speech by Whitelaw Reid: "The Gods of the Mills grind slowly but they grind exceeding long." And his revision of the psalmist, when he beheld Timothy Dwight and Jeremiah Day together on Yale campus, may be quoted once more: "Day unto Dwight uttereth speech, and Dwight unto Day showeth knowledge."

It was he also, who, when asked to supply an inscription for a building of the great San Francisco Water Company, gave them two. The first which they did not use was: "Stolen waters run sweet." The second they found more to their liking for it read: "The waters hereof shall make glad the city." And I always liked his *riposte* to a man who had told a succession of rough stories. Disturbed by Uncle Tom's stony countenance, the pornographer said apologetically, "Perhaps, you have heard these stories before?" only to be withered by the answer, "Never, thank God!"

Under his roof I spent my first anxious days in Berkeley, once again a new boy in an old school, but informed and encouraged by as pleasant a guide as heart could desire. That kindness meant a great deal, though I hardly realized

for a year or more that the effort of taking me around was made at the imminent risk of pain and danger, for angina pectoris was definitely already in the picture. Later by an unusual decision of fate, I was able to repay that kindness in a measure by what for me was an act of incredible daring. He was the sort one would do such a thing for.

Uncle Tom's chum and *alter ego* was my chief, Charles Mills Gayley, without competitor the best boss in the world. In a previous chapter I have deplored my first printed book, with the saving admission that it affected my history pleasantly. Mr. Gayley had read that insufficient work after turning down my application for an instructorship, and he at least must have perceived some shadowy promise, for later he gave me my chance. Also he was one of the few who could see that the allusiveness of the little book, however pedantic, was at least genuine, which was a darn sight more than lay within the abilities or the reading of more than one full professor of English I have known. It would be wholly impossible to do more than suggest the fire and life in him. He crackled with energy, and yet he was never wearisome. And I hadn't expected anything like him at all. His very first word to me, as he came, a beautiful straight soldier of a man, to the door of his study, where I waited for him and fate, were of this order: "I've not had breakfast. Come to the dining-room. I've got the most magnificent peach that ever was seen. You shall eat it." I felt we were going to get on. And never was an intuition better justified. From that day forward no moment passed when I did not feel protected and instructed by him. He forgave my ignorance, and I for one feel that he reduced its extent—no mean task.

Mr. Gayley was born in Shanghai and to his dying day turned livid with rage when douaniers looked at him a second time, after reading the name of the city on his passport. He had his schooling in Ulster, where they unquestionably taught the rudiments well. And before he had

reached his majority, he had stumped Ireland for Home Rule and Parnell, and to such a purpose, that the Lost Leader offered him a seat in Parliament, if he would take out citizenship papers. But he was an American by conviction and gave up politics in Great Britain for classics in Michigan where he taught Latin after graduation. English studies presently engrossed him, and he went to Giessen to plumb them further. He was a strange product of the German mill, for at the time certainly specialization was their ideal, whereas his was catholicity. His mind was universal and ecumenical. I have known few men with more information on more topics. Yet he was invariably accurate and succinct. Out of the Great Pacific Deep of his memory came the book you needed, the whole allusion you had only in part. Maimonides, Rabelais, W. S. Gilbert, it hardly mattered. I once praised someone like Paul Shorey for this quality. A colleague spoke up: "Gayley's like that. He knows." He did. And there was soundness in him too, as well as the all-inclusiveness and the glancing brightness. I think he was the first man of parts and position to raise his voice against the systematic absurdity of the German process of higher education in the form foisted on America by President Eliot. So far it has tended to make synthetic Wilamowitzes rather than Mommsens. Mr. Gayley's little book, *Idols of Education*, was a much needed blast against the soul-slaying, brain-shackling, youth-withering, methodological, bureaucratic régime that has made our graduate schools what they are. Furthermore, he practiced what he preached. Quite early in my career he told me in so many words not to take thought how I should add the pharisaic cubit of the doctorate to my stature. "I'll take care of you," he said. And he did, with the result that I was, I suppose, almost the last man in English studies in any great American university to be promoted assistant professor without having passed through that Valley of the Dry Bones, where, contrary to Ezekiel, flesh does

not return upon them. For that only, Mr. Gayley's name would be blessed in my sight. But a day hardly went by without giving me other reasons. Suggestions so ingeniously insinuated that they seemed your own proper impulses, hints that cleared away the small difficulties that beset every inexperienced teacher, quaintly expressed precepts, at which I might have laughed had I not grown aware of their immediate validity, these were the characteristics of a guidance of which I was hardly conscious. And it was the same in our games and diversions. He pleased me once on a golf fairway, when I had brought off a magnificent left-handed shot, which had changed his jubilation at my difficult lie into a sick certainty that he was going to lose the hole. "Hm," he said in disgust, "I didn't know you were ambisinistrous." I like the coinage. So much of what is human is left-handed both ways. Even his comic rages made life bright, much as his generosity did. I was his subordinate for thirteen years, when times were good, when they were evil, in sickness, and in health, in the hour of death, and in the Day of Judgment. And I feel about him now as I felt always about him—bright, beautiful, enchanting, incarnate vitality.

But though Mr. Gayley was the nearest great planet, he was by no means the only luminary in the remarkable system which I had entered from the outer darkness of space. There were at least twenty-five men of mark, most of whom I came to know and some of whom since they affected me especially I propose to mention. There was, for instance, Hilgard the gentle old German, disciple and heir of Liebig, who during the Civil War had saved his college in the South from being burned by each of the maddened armies. The greatest agricultural chemist of his time, he was much unlike too many of his specialized successors, for he was a man of simply enormous cultivation, and in no sense the exploiter of an apple-disease, or a blatherer about farm-economics.

Lawson, the geologist, who opined that the Cro-magnards were clearly a remarkable race because they had exterminated the inferior Neanderthal men "without whiskey or missionaries," was and is as vivid an animal as it is necessary to know. In conversation he gave no quarter. And my crest bowed in the dust, when, after I had uttered some amiable irrelevance, he turned tigerishly upon me, almost shouting: "Speak first and think afterwards seems to be your principle," in spite of which, after I had publicly christened him "the sabre-tooth," we became friends. He had a real gift for phrase and could express contempt so that the shingles came off the roof. It was told him that someone had been made a dean. "Dean! Dean!" he snorted. "He's only a transcendental clerk." Last year I saw Harvard honor him at the Tercentenary among his peers. The fiery young Scot, who found the earliest known fossil, is a fiery old Scot now, but has not relaxed the fierce curiosity or lost the humor that between them made his work effective and his conversation worth seeking at lunch-time for a dozen years.

Wholly different, but equally exciting, was Brailsford Robertson, the Australian biologist, a sort of Chatterton among scientists. When he was twenty, Ostwald and Arrhenius had written to congratulate him on his researches at the Antipodes. He seemed absolutely slated for the laurel, but it was his hard destiny to be a great man *manqué*. He died in his forties before achieving what lay in him to do, having lost three or four years wandering in a theoretic labyrinth whence the minotaur had escaped. I had the disgusting experience of seeing him stumble into it, but suspected no evil, till years later when one of his colleagues told me of a curve that had been extrapolated on sound principles to disastrous ends. That blind accident should have brought down such a falcon towering in his pride of place was hateful to me, for to know

Robertson was like knowing Darwin or Faraday. This is not just my opinion. I venture to guess that Morgan the geneticist, whom I once met at Robertson's table, thought of him out of his knowledge much as I did out of my ignorance. That meal incidentally produced an amusing trifle. The talk had been biological shop miles over my head, and Morgan, a most courteous man, sought to draw me into the conversation. He asked me if I knew anything of rhymed physiologies. Now anyone who has investigated the Spenserians knows Phineas Fletcher's "Purple Island," and I rode triumphantly into the tourney, not only visibly a master in my own field but with one foot in theirs. Everything is vanity, but vanity is highly diverting.

Hamlet's speech about the character of his father would hardly be too much to apply to Robertson. He was a case under a dreadful modification of Pasteur's axiom about discovery. "The trained mind and *pas de chance*." All one can say is "Damn the luck!"

As important a single influence and force as a man ever encounters anywhere was Arthur Ryder, Professor of Sanskrit. When he died last year alone in his classroom with the solitary girl-student who was taking his course as the sole attendant of his end, a light went out. Gilbert Lewis, himself no slouch, said to me that the greatest mind in the University was gone. Nor do I feel any inclination to deny it. A wit of the first order (his description of the history department as consisting of "a sham giant surrounded by real pygmies" has the very smack of Voltaire), a poet of vivid and sharp distinction, and a translator of the Sanskrit Classics absolutely without peer or parallel, he had, to borrow an image from a Hindu poet, "at once the danger and the benignity of the cobra that spread its hood to keep the sun off the infant Krishna." He was the greatest antidote to stuffed shirts I have ever known; and the greatest friend of innocence and simplicity.

From the beginning of our friendship he strengthened and confirmed what I dimly knew, namely that all subjects are not of equal value and, some facts are significant and that some, often quite picturesque ones, are not. He made me live the belief that it is necessary to read Chaucer, whereas civilized intercourse is possible between reasonable persons, without a special knowledge of Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde, both of them at that moment still stars of the ascendant. Also he rubbed my nose in William James and Tolstoi. I cannot be sufficiently grateful that, at the end of the ultra-violet decade and the beginning of the infra-red, I could talk with him about great books I was digging into for the first time. His violently individual opinions were unimaginably refreshing to the slave of split infinitives, hanging participles, and the other attributes of thousand-word themes. Merely to talk with him over the chess-board helped me to put in some sort of order an intellectual house which had been shakily constructed and sketchily furnished. One belief to which he permanently converted me was that critical writing is a base activity. If Arnold really liked writing *On Translating Homer*, why then so much less Arnold he. The only form of the habit which Ryder could even tolerate was what has been called "*O que c'est beau*" criticism. A man who writes in a burst of enthusiasm for a new work of art is doing what is natural, however unnecessary. But a man who is concerned with trends and tendencies and schools, who rebukes Sinclair Lewis because he isn't like Willa Cather, or Pope for failing to resemble Keats, is talking through his hat and possibly suspects as much. Ryder put it concisely in an aphoristic definition. "A professional literary critic is a man who hates literature." What a lot of them there are! However sweeping the definition, in my sight there is much truth in it. Yet he was the first man in my world to recommend to me Lytton Strachey, whose

Landmarks of French Literature enchanted him with its brief causticity. That must have been nearly five years before *Eminent Victorians* was reviewed on the front page, beside horrifying communiqués that admitted the destruction of a whole Army—surely the strangest compliment ever paid any author in these times, with the possible exception of the burning of Thomas Mann's books. Ryder will reappear in these pages. A man who had been such a Caesar to my Antony would be apt to do so.

The long table under the skylight in the Faculty Club dining-room was to me a focus of mirth and excitement. I saw Gilbert Lewis there once when his dark eyes were blazing with triumph. Eddington had just wired from Australia that the displacement of a star seen in the eclipse was of the order predicted by believers in the relativity theory. There I beheld Bill Williams, most pacific of physicists, unsheathe the sword against Sommerfeld himself in the flesh, Sommerfeld who, whatever his knowledge of the forces that operate within the scientific atom, did not understand the unscientific atom—and proved it with German thoroughness. Richard Tolman sat at that table. He was always diverting, never more so than when most in earnest, and interesting about anything from the Pentateuch to the actinium series. With him, though it strain belief, I played polo to curdle the blood of Buckmasters and Hitchcocks in a tanbark rink. It was not Hurlingham, but it would serve, and has stood me in good stead when compelled to deal with "Produce of Long Island." Walter Hart might be there, astute as he was learned. From his lips the epigram came so easily that you were hardly aware of it till the burst. It was like being shot by a gun with a silencer. One Yale man, I am happy to say a chemist, learned not to take him on. He twitted Hart about a mis-created effort of the Harvard administration to apply efficiency engineering to education. The newspaper headlines

read: "Harvard men must now work." Hart's rejoinder, "Yale will watch the experiment with interest," is the height of instruction and edification. Less frequently the gentle and charming Chauncey Welles dropped into a chair to expatiate and confer. He was of the rare disappointed who are not embittered. No private ambition of his had failed to be defeated. Even academically considered he had at best a Pyrrhic victory. The hard and the light thought of him as a greying second-rater. Oddly enough others did not. And Lawson the fiery respected his "capacity for indignation." He had never had an unkind impulse in his life. And if his own Quixotism undid him, something about him compelled persons who could run rings around him intellectually to admire every fiber of a man wholly outside of the crass category of the successful.

These men, and others of whom more hereafter, were always in my background or my foreground, whether as allies or as companions, and, living or dead, have not ceased to be my friends. From the beginning they gave me aid and comfort of which I stood in some need in a two-sided struggle against my own ignorance and that of others.

By the time my first recitation hour came to an end I saw that there was a sharp distinction between college students East and West. The average eastern undergraduate at least in my time, behaved a good deal as if college was his unquestioned right and he could do what he pleased with his own. In comparison with the Westerner, he was a good deal better prepared for, and a good deal less interested in, the intellectual matters to which he from time to time directed his wavering attention. Generally his background was better too, and not infrequently he had had opportunities to travel, to hear music, and to visit the theater, which had not necessarily enriched his mind. Of these last the Californian knew almost nothing. But he was correspondingly, if superficially, eager, a delightful

shock to a tyro just plucked from the cotton field. The western undergraduate was honestly curious, and wanted the outline of a subject anyhow, whether or no his interest was deep enough to dig into the details. To him the university was a palace of art, a focus of the desirable, in which it was difficult but creditable to remain. A boy who has had opportunities so slender that he has noticed it himself, and who has escaped from the hay-presses of Modesto, is apt to be impressed by white colonnades and academic omniscience in a manner inconceivable beside the waters of the Charles or the Quinipiac. This amiable weakness had at least one satisfactory result from the standpoint of a beginning teacher, namely that certain problems in the instruction of adolescence scarcely ever arose. The maintenance of order just didn't have to be thought about. One took courtesy and discipline for granted. And such scenes as occasionally occurred at Harvard or Yale were unknown. To hold attention seemed as easy as shooting birds sitting, and by no means so immoral. A teacher's principal difficulty was to know his subject well enough not to take the edge off such innocent enthusiasm. A ludicrous example of the difference in attitude, West and East, occurred in my first term. Five minutes after the hour began the supposedly quenched coal in my pipe ignited a handful of matches in my coat-pocket. A great puff of smoke rose up, and I burned my hand, putting out that highly personal fire. Had such a thing occurred at Yale, with me among those present, eighteen months before, I shudder to think of the uproar that would have bewildered a young instructor, and the general delight at the spectacle of learning in flames. Those young Californians looked at me with grave and flattering concern, and seemed as relieved as I was, when I conquered the conflagration. If they had been Easterners I should have had a contempt for the pusillanimous spirit

that did not seize such an opportunity. But already I understood.

There is a lot of fun in introducing young ranchmen from the San Joaquin, or girls who know no delight beyond a San José drug store, to poetry, when no one of them has ever seen *The Oxford Book of English Verse*. It is an engaging experience. And that part was all right. But I found to my horror as I plowed through my first batch of thousand-word themes, that I hardly knew enough grammar to teach it. It was three mortal years before I even began to feel adequate, nor am I sure I ever was. And there was no shade of despondency and sense of defeat with which I was not familiar. This in a way was as it should have been. For it made me regard every recitation with such painful interest as a commander may feel about a battle, where the enemy shows signs of possessing incalculable reserves. Never once to my recollection did I slip into the blasé attitude of him for whom his task has become routine. And the beginning of every hour was to me like being compelled to dive through a thin film of ice into unimaginable deeps. And never, it seemed to me, did I master the art of asking the question that would keep a recitation from immediately dying, of explaining at the right place, of not explaining at the wrong one, or best of all of letting them explain. I can smile at my flounderings now, but even a more successful humorist might have found it difficult then.

Yet from the first I was lucky. In my second division on my first day sat a boy with whom I was instantly on delightful terms, which continue to this hour. Presently there were others. And as far as personal, apart from educational, matters went, things were on a good basis. I really liked them and I believe they liked me. It's a long way from a hoe-gang in Alabama to English 1A in California, but I believe I had learned something in the cotton field. To parody Gibbon's remark about his militia service, that the major of infantry

had not been useless to the Historian of the Roman Empire, the overseer in the red furrows did his bit for the instructor among the yellow chairs. I had some reason to be pleased when a satirist took off my mannerism and idiosyncrasy in a skit in the student yearbook. It was a good sign. I can look back on that part of my relations and feel a certain legitimate pride.

One saw a tremendous lot of what is included under the trite phrase human nature. And the more you saw the more you were permitted to see. There is a page in *Stalky & Co.* which explains many things about teaching, in particular that for one reason or another students are not necessarily immensely happy creatures. A boy from a mountain county in one of my classes wrote a rather good paper about his general hatred of the universe. I wondered what was biting young Werther and said a few kind words. Like Eugene Field, that was all he needed. He burst into tears with a wail: "I'm so homesick." Within a week he had soared to dizzy heights of scholastic virtue. In this manner the teacher may learn. He will learn in other ways too, when a really beautiful young woman, not quite but almost as distraught as Ophelia, complains to him that an elderly, respectable, and incredibly chivalrous colleague has made passes at her. It was impossible to believe that hysterical testimony, on which the breakdown was certainly not without comedy. She was utterly incapable of the work she had undertaken, and he had told her so, and that she ought to divert herself in other fields, for which she was clearly better fitted. This she had freely translated into an invitation to live with him and be his love. Though it had its sad side, that episode was amusing. And tragi-comic also was the occasion, the first and only one, when I disrupted a convent—by giving a young nun an A and an old one a B. The older lady told me in so many words that not in all eternity would that injustice be wiped out. The younger one, on the advice of her Mother

Superior, informed me that she had been accused by the old fury of a personal attachment—to me, an unpleasant implication as against a Bride of Christ. The Mother Superior, before whose tribunal the charge had been brought, must have been quite a person, for thereafter the young nun was permitted to visit my classes, against the custom of the order, with no duenna sister in attendance. One could be amused or grieved by such an episode, according as one looked at it. But there was nothing but grief in the last example I shall supply with respect to the education of the teacher. No one could forget the face of one boy who was in an agony as dreadful, and as unjustly his, as can fall to the lot of man. He spat the whole horror out under the eucalyptus tree back of my house. Ultimately he solved as ghastly a problem as ever was fronted, like a gentleman which he emphatically was. I am glad I knew that kid for the glimpse he gave me of hell on earth and the genuinely heroic.

At the time of my arrival in the West, the town of Berkeley might be said to be a department of the university, let us say the Home Department. Though there were many business men who commuted to San Francisco, the whole life and tone and pace of things depended on the university. The place had the pleasant quality of a small New England town, in spite of the fact that it was already a considerable city. It made you think of a gigantic Farmington, a Concord in Brobdignag. Extreme simplicity, due in part to good taste and no doubt also to academic poverty, marked the pleasantest conditions of living I have encountered. Thorstein Veblen was fifty miles away at Stanford then, but he could have found little conspicuous waste and no competitive display. The very few people of means lived as simply as their neighbors. We were almost snobbish about it. Yet the gatherings at twenty houses where I loved to go, were productive of happier laughter than one always hears and of conversation as good as it gets. Largely responsible

for this were a half-dozen old ladies, every one of whom had wit, elegance and intellectual style. Persons of whatever sex or age were welcome in their informal salons, where everything got discussed in a vital and epigrammatic manner past my praise. San Francisco is said to have had more good talkers in the seventies than any American city, and I can well believe it from my contact with charming old women who had been young in those days. They talked as precisely and gracefully as Jane Austen heroines, and they were not one whit interested in the rise or fall of their neighbor's finances or in their connubial infelicities. Mrs. Palmer, her beautiful dark eyes blazing with pleasure and excitement, if the subject were George Sand or Goethe or Mark Twain, and equally entertaining, twitting or being twitted, in some famous triangular conflict with Mrs. Charles Blake or Mrs. Howison, could make an evening for anyone. And there wasn't a trace of any hateful highbrow business about it, no factitious Eleusinian pomp of the intellectual. On the contrary only wit, learning, brilliant common sense, and kindness, which made a bridge for her to any other human being between ninety and nine. No spiritual engineer can do more.

I speak of Mrs. Palmer in particular, because she was, so to say, *prima inter pares*, and because I was on intimate terms with her for many years. Mrs. Palmer had the odd distinction of being the only woman ever born on Yale campus, for she came into the world in the house of her grandfather, Jeremiah Day, then president. As a growing girl she had visited much in Concord, where Emerson and Thoreau were familiars of her aunt's household. She had come as a young woman to California over the Isthmus just in time to see the Vigilantes in full blast. Her escort one Sunday afternoon had suddenly hurried her into a side-street without explanation for his action. But out of the tail of her eye she had perceived the reason, the bodies of Casey

and Cora hanging from the crane that thrust out from the upper story of Fort Gunnybags. She had known the Californian worthies like Bret Harte and Edward Rowland Sill, and Sill's copy of Landor which she gave me is on a shelf in this room as I write. To sit with her by the window that looked toward the Gate, when she was in the mood for a little conversation, was a privilege high. She had seen Dickens shoot his cuffs so that the adoring multitude might admire his gorgeous sleeve-links, and seen him shoot them again that they might admire yet more the still more gorgeous pair to which he had shifted in the intermission. That seemed to bring one close to other times, with respect to which she gave me reason to alter my opinion. No heresy is more absurd than the cant of the moderns about the dourness and fatalism of New England before the Civil War. Ginger was hot i'the mouth in Connecticut of the fifties no matter how many Malvolios were virtuous. It was Mrs. Palmer who first revealed to me the ancient scandal of the *Yale Gallinipper*, a publication of which my grandfather was business manager. That sheet was suppressed by the authorities, because of a scurrilous ode to the president of the university. The opening words were "O Jerry," and doubtless it was sufficiently innocent, judged by modern standards, but the charm of it to the guilty inner circle was the fact that a satiric piece sharp enough to bring the authorities lumbering into action, was the work of Olivia Day, Mrs. Palmer's aunt, and the daughter of the subject of the poem. Other facts might easily be adduced. But that episode makes clear to me that the theory of a New England of gloom and doom stands in immense need of serious revision. It was gotten up by outsiders with axes to grind. Our novelists and historians ought not to lose sight of the mirth and variety which, for all the much advertised grimness, have always been great and essential parts of the Yankee temperament.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

I have dwelt a little on Mrs. Palmer, because she and her circle were typical of New England, transplanted, and at its charming best. And it was that transplanted New England that had founded the university and given it tone. The poverty of the faculty was more than compensated for by grace and brains in a city where even *nouveaux riches* subdued a disposition to splurge. On the whole it is my considered opinion that I have never been in a place where people were more genuine and attractive, and where there was so little disposition to keep up with the Joneses. What America may yet be, a country of uncompromised and uncompromising intelligences, was, it seems to me, foreshadowed in the unpretentious town. We have drifted very far from all that. But we could return.

❧ VIII ❧

FIRST SOLO

MY FIRST year at the university would have been exciting in any case, if only because of the tigerish effort to keep half a jump ahead of three swollen divisions of Freshmen. But there were other sources of interest. I was writing verse with a furious energy and little skill. I was rapidly falling in love with the lady whom I subsequently married. In short, it was a very good time indeed and the world smiled in a novel and indulgent manner.

On \$83.33 a month, one is clearly no Croesus. But it was the first time I had ever earned my living. And there is a thrill in that to those who have hitherto been comfortably supported. The mere sense of independence is superb. I lived like a fighting-cock and have never felt so wealthy since. I eked out my salary with the sale of some of my verses to editors of remarkable generosity, whose like is not found in these degenerate days. When my first cheque arrived from *Harper's Weekly* (what possessed them to pay me \$100.00 for that particular set of doggerel verses, I cannot imagine), Pizarro in the treasury of Atahualpa was, paragoned with me, a mere collector of loose change. And two acceptances in one mail during the Christmas holidays proved that no one had yet shot Santa Claus. I did not know

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how cold the baths of Apollo could be and might be pardoned for not understanding that one could get away to a flying start and still bog down at the water-jump or fall at Becher's Brook. The sight of those first verses with illustrations was like seeing one's passport to fortune with all the necessary visas. It took many a rejection slip to shatter that first and not at all incomprehensible confidence.

There was a lot of fun in the world. Almost the first man I encountered when I went into the Faculty Club for luncheon on my first day was my classmate Selden Rose, whom I had only known as a handsome but casual acquaintance in college. He had come out with Rudolph Schevill, the new head of the Spanish department, as a teaching fellow in Spanish. I had admired him, but did not foresee the intimacy that should grow up between us. From the moment when we shook hands that noon in the brown-timbered dining-room, his powerful, penetrating, and playful mind has been a pleasure and a necessity to me. To light by chance on such a friend at the very outset of the adventure was the very top of good fortune. And our gross jackbooted feasts were great stuff then, and now in retrospect. The noble debauch on Thanksgiving Day, 1910, when Selden, Jack Pigott, and I, strangers in a strange land, with nearly twenty dollars apiece, took possession of Felix's Cafe on Montgomery Street (there were no other guests) and ate and drank for nearly five hours, deserves a Rabelais to recount it. We behaved very well. But at the end of it, when I left them for another party, over their physical protest, I think we all knew more about Pantagruel, a person concerning whom everyone should have some theoretic and practical knowledge.

There is no hospitality like that of the legitimate Californian. The difficulty is not to abuse it. A busy man will drop his affairs to take care of some Easterner with a letter of introduction. And what they must think, after breaking their backs in the West, when they are told in the East by

a secretary over the telephone that Mr. So-and-So is in conference, I leave to the imagination. I got more than my fair share of that hospitality in Berkeley, in San Francisco, and the adjoining towns. And there was a liberality and absence of stiffness about the little parties that was new and exciting. The Victorian cloud had never been thick and had lifted early in that sunny world. Young people today may think it idiotic that I was startled when I discovered that it was absolutely the thing to take a girl to dine in the city *à deux*, and a darn good thing too. But no one in any set I knew could do it in the East then. The chaperon, still enthroned by the Atlantic, hardly existed on the West Coast, and if she did at all, was, as debutantes say now, a bit of swank like a Rolls. Manners, however, if anything were better and easier. I liked it.

All that year on top of my desperate immediate activities, I was reading. I grew aware of whole continents of literature hitherto unknown or merely alluded to by more experienced voyagers, and made the beginnings of a systematic exploration of English poetry. This interest, natural enough for me, was greatly encouraged from an odd quarter—the United States Army. Colonel James Walker Benét at that time commanded the Benicia Arsenal on the Carquinez Straits, and his son, William Rose Benét, who was a friend and relative of Selden Rose, used to take me up on weekends to the absolutely paradisiac old army-post. It wasn't like an arsenal. It was like the back-drop of a romantic play, all pepper trees and acacias, and fountains, and pillared porches. Merely to enjoy the hospitality of that family in such a place was more than one deserved, and to know the Colonel, for a man of my tastes, was like a delightful electric shock. The Colonel was a fine soldier, amused at the fact that he commanded forty-five men. But eight years later he ruled forty-five thousand as easily and well. And he differed in one respect from all other soldiers. He knew more

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about English poetry than most poets and all professors, and he had the Elizabethan lyrics by heart. Such a man deserved to have all three of his children become excellent poets, which as the world knows came to pass. It was a sight to see him in his white uniform, a mint julep in each hand, as he waited on the leafy porch for me, while MacDonald, the old Sergeant, who had been in the Pope's Guard in 1870, got my bag out of the horse-drawn station-wagon. And then the talk with him over the cool drink about "Death's Jest Book," and "The Hound of Heaven," or "Farewell, Rewards and Fairies." Better memories than had their origins in the Benét weekends may be known to other men, but I desire to be shown. That place was heaven for a person who liked what I liked. What odder thing than to be in a room with four or five charming people, every one of whom knew, "without being solemn about it," that poetry is one of the few things which are really important?

All through that year with its splendor of freedom and its misery of feeling insufficient, I had grown more and more conscious that if I wished to keep my job, I should have to know German better. The triumphant moment when I opened a letter from the administration, which informed me that I had been reappointed for the ensuing year, did nothing to alter that belief. And accordingly as soon as the second semester ended, I bolted for Germany. Bremen, dull beyond German dullness, received me. I found Berlin much better and very like Chicago. I had only a day or two there, but I had the encyclopedic mind of Robert Blake to guide my ignorance, and the interest of the place was undeniable in spite of the gosh-awful ugliness of much of it. One picture made a strange impression even then, though I have no gift of prophecy—Unter den Linden at sunset, and a yellow Zeppelin nosing like a goldfish against a soft breeze a thousand feet overhead. All faces looked up as they heard

the musical monotonous thunder. I suppose they thought their future was in the air. A few days later, in the pretty town of Marburg, I was settled *en pension*, at the house of the Frau Geheimrath von Osthof, and struggling hard with the difficult tongue, which I have never subjugated to suit me.

Quite by accident I was in just the right frame of mind. Properly to approach German literature one should be twenty-three, homesick and convalescing nicely, without being aware of the fact, from what is called an unhappy love affair. One should also be in Germany. All four conditions obtained in my case, and I had the superlative luck to pitch upon the one perfectly appropriate book to begin with, which the reader can easily guess was *The Sorrows of Werther*. I simply gorged myself on the essence of sentiment, and wept freely over the tremendous periods. The claptrap in the book has been only too visible ever since Thackeray wrote

*Charlotte having seen his body
Borne before her on a shutter,
Like a well-conducted lady,
Went on cutting bread and butter.*

Nevertheless, I feel that to land on it with both feet and feel naïvely the spirit, the experience of it, was something never to be regretted. Goethe really became a figure for me and I am glad I read nearly all his poetry when I was young. He wasn't the only one. The Wallenstein Trilogy might appear artificial and constructed to the more discerning, but not to me. And Grillparzer's dramas, particularly *König Ottokar*, got under my skin too. But the glory of German literature is of course lyric poetry. How a people who once had such unbelievable grace in their minds and in their expression, can print the "Lorelei" in a contemporary an-

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thology under the caption "author unknown" is a question I leave to Oedipus.

Another question is almost as bad. I had a perfectly charming time in those two soft summer months. Marburg is a quaint place with one of the most beautiful Northern Gothic churches in the world. People were kind to me, really pleasant and friendly. Yet the fact is that, like nine out of ten foreigners, I didn't really like Germany. Three years later the very best propagandists for the Allies were the American college professors who had taken their doctorates in Germany. In May, 1914, they would tell you almost tearfully about golden student years at Goettingen or Leipzig. And they were all on the band-wagon before Von Kluck turned away from Paris in August. There is something almost disconcerting about the unanimity of the feeling, which I think is aroused by the Teutonic demand for admiration. The German habitually runs down directly or by implication whatever is not German, however good, and habitually praises whatever is German, however bad.* And he feels a sort of missionary urge to convert you to his view of his own not inconsiderable virtues. A Frenchman may regard you as a prancing barbarian, but he implies it in a manner as if he recognized that prancing, though a primitive art, is not without interest. But a German will say that you are a prancing barbarian in such a manner that it is impossible to understand his lack of fellow-feeling. And it is the private grossness of individual Germans, particularly when clothed with some little public or academic authority, that poisons the mind of the world against them. Never in any other country have I seen such a scene as took place when my landlord, otherwise a charming man, had a dis-

* Mr. Benjamin de Casseres has collected the opinions of Friederich Nietzsche on Germany and the Germans. By a singular coincidence it would appear that Nietzsche had the good taste and good fortune to arrive at my conclusions some years before I was born.

SEMI-CENTENNIAL

pute with a one-armed peasant, his neighbor. The screaming voice, the menace, the helplessness of the man who had to take it right or wrong, made me sick. In the United States Caspar Milquetoast would have punched Al Capone's nose before submitting to such a violation of human dignity. But only very few Germans, most of them in exile, seem to bother much about human dignity, which can only be preserved by laws and by manners uncommon in Imperial Germany, and non-existent under the new tyranny.

Yet what exceptions there are! I found them in the pleasant, picturesque little provincial town and in great roaring Frankfort, where I went once or twice to hear the opera. A *kneipe* at the Hasso-Borussia society was at least as good fun as any American undergraduate gathering. There for once I figured as far-wandering Odysseus and wove such a tale of the Far West as captured the attention of the young heroes of the mensur. They were absolutely open-mouthed about it, and asked for more details about Indians like little children. Nine out of ten of those pleasant boys must have been dead by the third winter after. "No front has yet been invented where second lieutenants live very long." I watched between incredulity and disgust the strange sport of those young creatures. The three cuts, the three guards, and the cheek laid open, became a bore after the first bout with the schläger or the saber. But I suppose it was good preparation for men whose destiny it was to lead infantry columns against British batteries firing with open sights.

More attractive than the dull and bloody duels was a strange evening with a total stranger in a beer-garden on the other side of the Lahn. It was a regular white night, all moonlight and black shadow, with a Siegfried of a boy singing to a guitar, to himself, and suddenly with complete confidence, to us. He had the whole *Liederschatz* in that guitar, and he sang beautifully without affectation. When he tore off "In Schwarzem Wahlfisch bei Askalon" it would

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have broken up a papal consistory, and when he cried out the great song:

*Es zogen drei Bürschen wohl über den Rhein.
Bei einer Frau Wirthin da kehrten sie ein,*

one understood "the simple-hearted people that have pleasure in their pain."

Those exciting months came to an end. I visited some nice people, almost certainly Jews, at Frankfort, where I wept at *Tannhäuser*, quite like a German, and was made intensely drunk on kirsch by my host. He not only liked his cherry-brandy, but was as keen a connoisseur of English literature as ever was stock-broker. Swift was his particular admiration. I have been looking for years for a man on Wall Street, who has a shelf in his library and a warm place in his heart for, say, Heine.

On the morning I left Frankfort the Agadir Crisis came to a head. Breakfast was a melancholy meal. My host and his wife were visibly frightened, for Lloyd George's fighting speech was "sehr böse" and gave pause to saber-rattling emperors. It's dreadful to think how long that Welshman has been news. The train was full of silent and excited men who dashed out at every station to buy newspapers. It sounds horribly ungrateful that after two of the pleasantest months of my life I had no sympathy at all with Germany, and was as happy as a clam, when at Cologne it became evident that her bluff had been successfully called. Men settled back in their seats. The tension was over. Everyone knew that there would be no war—this time—just as we know it today.

The Ostend boat took me across a channel so calm that every star had its counterpart in the motionless dark water. I dashed from London to Ireland, where I beheld another Lake Asquam which they will call Killarney. Three days among the Children of Wrath, a week at sea, a hot overland voyage, and the veteran returned to his post of command.

INTERVAL BUT NOT OF REPOSE

THE five and a half years between September, 1911, and April, 1917, were doubtless more interesting to me than I can make what befell me to other people. In the first place I got married, no man more happily. I have known no more interesting mind than that of the Lady in question. And that side of life was simply the apotheosis of satisfaction. In my semi-public job things were perhaps not so pleasing. Pressure of work increased every year. The relatively small university I had joined grew horribly, doubling, and tripling, and threatening to quadruple. And I found myself giving more courses and more varied ones.

One storm I weathered under what have always seemed to me curious circumstances. At the beginning of my third year, Freshman English was reorganized lock, stock, and barrel, and a novel method of teaching was introduced, which had its merits, though I still think of it as pretty mechanical. I found the new method difficult, as did the other instructors, in particular a new Ph.D. from the East, with whom I struck up a friendship. In many ways he was better trained than I, especially so in philology, but as a newcomer he was distinctly on trial. After the new system had been in rather halting and clanking motion for about a

month, the professor in command visited all classes to see how we were getting along. The work had been going so badly in all three of my divisions that I had come to hate the course, and the visit of the inquisitor was merely an extra turn of the screw on a man who was numb already. But the unexpected happened. There was such a recitation in the presence of the mute with the bowstring as I never experienced before and very seldom afterward. Had every boy and girl in the class been my familiar friend, and had they known that my academic fate was in the hands of the visitor in the back of the room, they could not have played up better, if so well. Every one of his notions was demonstrated before the delighted eyes of the lord high executioner, who purred audibly. The place was electric with excitement and interest. And I couldn't believe my eyes or my ears. It was well for me. My philologist friend was dropped at the end of the year, which is a bad thing for a well-trained and competent man of twenty-four. But for the strange accident of that unique recitation, I might well have been the partner of his misfortune.

Mr. Gayley believed in having his boys do varied things, and in process of time I found myself giving more advanced courses. One of these had a pleasant origin. A poet in a Freshman division asked me if I would help him and a friend of his with their verses and talk to them about prosody. I agreed to do this and gave them a couple of extra-curricular hours a week. Though it took time, it was great fun, for they were in desperate earnest, and the little class forced me to arrange my ideas. At the end of that year the only begetter of that extra-legal instruction promised to get fifteen good students, if I would offer a formal course in verse-composition. Thus English 106 was born, and no one ever had a more diverting experience than the instructor. The boy was as good as his word, but he went far beyond it. For past all doubt the fifteen most brilliant

creatures in a student body of eight or nine thousand were in that class. They had minds of real distinction then. And today practically all of them are people of mark. And they were perfectly charming into the bargain. It would make any teacher's mouth water just to remember that lot and the things they did and have done since. A leading dramatist, a first-rate college president, the most prolific pot-boiler of the times, who beyond that is a brilliant poet, a poetess of real power and distinction for whose posthumous volume I wrote the introduction only last year, and a fine translator from the Slavic! My lord, what fun I had! The verses they wrote were adolescent and immature, but what bright gleams of parts, and what fire and drive! I was as near happy with that class as a teacher ever gets. Not that I can be said to have taught them. But I take some credit for having the sense to stand aside and let the Liverpool Packet go.

Even after that aerie were graduated the course stormed along with the momentum they imparted. There were nearly always exciting persons in it. And the mere threat of making something seemed to keep it healthy. I never felt any sense of sterility or bookishness about it, as I was too apt to feel about my more formal lectures. What tosh I gave English 106 was tosh in good faith. And I never felt about it one twinge such as a man feels who must cover certain ground with examinations in the background. The whole thing was a profitable pleasure, and it was good to have encountered the bright engaging minds of Frederick Faust, of Sidney Howard, of Jacques LeClercq, of Genevieve Taggard.

Meanwhile I likewise labored in my own vineyard. George Noyes, one of the best Slavic scholars in the country and as good a man as I have known, suggested that I assist him in a verse-translation of the Serbian ballads. Jacob Grimm knew that they were the best in Europe. And before him Goethe had made a magnificent German poem out of "The

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Wife of Hasan Aga." We set to work. Now if one works with George Noyes one works hard. And in this case I worked fast too. In three terrible months in 1913, in and out of free time, we hurled together a book of 275 pages. And I wrote three hundred lines of my part in one day. George's part was perfectly done, but mine, which is what the reader sees, shows evidence of the haste of a young man rushing to complete his first big job. Yet between us I think we did not altogether miss the strange fire that burns in the originals. And there is nothing to be ashamed of in the English version of the long and beautiful "Ballad of Ban Strahin."

It was George Noyes who started me off to try my luck with "The Song of Roland." I went up to Roncevaux alone with almost as little knowledge of Old French as Roland had of Basque. But I found that it wasn't so hard, and the poem got me, for a noble thing it is. I should not pretend to have done more than shadow forth that muscular epic. But neither has anyone else. And if a reader gets a whiff of the Middle Ages out of my translation I ask no more. And for myself I had a superlative emotion out of working at the gorgeous and angular old poem. The afternoon when I wrote the last line in the stone summerhouse in Santa Barbara still gleams in my mind. One does not have the sense of accomplishment so frequently as to forget it. And that was my first job with no one to lean on.

While I was thus engaged, the university was changing around me and not always for the better. The geometrical progression of the enrolment did not improve standards. And the administration came more and more under the influence of pedagogical theorists, whose notions were unconnected with fact. Probably no single institution has done so much harm to learning as the American University Department of Education, Teachers College, Columbia, being the stream-lined model of successful criminality. The em-

phasis on method (as if there weren't a million methods), the belief that someone who has heard teaching described is therefore qualified to teach something or anything, the notion that it is not necessary to know a subject but only where to look it up, such self-evident heresies as these were propagated by black-coated and rather slimy individuals who looked, acted, and thought like degenerate Methodist preachers. As Gayley said of one of them, they "caterpillared" all over the place like the larvae of hateful moths. It was in vain that Morse Stephens came all Balliol over them, or that Lawson gave one of them the lie direct in the open senate. The affront, as was indeed necessary, was digested with hateful meekness. But nothing would serve. They talked about "happifying" life. They lectured on "Brains *vs.* Battleships," knowing nothing of either. They were all for carrying "culture" to the people. And, as the phrase goes, by the time they got through with it, there was damned little to carry. What they were actually and secretly doing was building up a political machine which would enable the State Commissioner of Education to be Warwick the King-maker in California. Their efforts have, I believe, been since crowned with success. But it was sad to see learned and honest men, because of their learning and honesty, helpless to oppose the hateful activity of those yahoos.

It may be only that I was in a state of healthy disillusionment myself, but it seemed to me that an atmosphere of cynicism developed at Berkeley, that the old men ceased from dreaming dreams and the young men from seeing visions. Both turned with alacrity to golf, which may be conveniently played in the region three hundred days in the year. I observe in my own case a sort of unproductive period. I was despondent about verses that didn't please me, and rejection slips that were quite as hard to swallow with a smile. I may have wrongly diagnosed my own feel-

ings at the time. Perhaps like all expeditions to Troy, big or little, I was merely being held at Aulis by unfavorable winds. Fortunately no Iphigenia had to be sacrificed.

It wasn't all gloom for fine things came to pass. For one thing Gilbert Lewis arrived. And though I know nothing of chemistry and care less, the mere contact with his fierce and attractive intelligence catalysed languid processes, academic or otherwise. His magnetic mind drew about him brilliant young chemists, Gerald Branch, Ernest Gibson, Richard Tolman. I could only touch the selvage of his ideas, but I was as fascinated as the conventional rabbit in the presence of a wholly agreeable fer-de-lance. Unlike the intelligences of many men, Gilbert Lewis's works in all directions. And his opinions on politics or literature have nothing of the academic quality of the specialist, who is often incapable of displaying in one field the penetration which has won him his spurs in another. Gilbert Lewis was one of the very few men of my acquaintance, who was able to turn his talents to real account, when the war came. His mind, that perfectly drilled battery, could be trained on any point. And how quickly he was on the target!

And of course there was always delightful Arthur Ryder. At least two or three times a month, and sometimes oftener, our doorbell would ring its prelude to hours as interesting as I remember. His sardonic, darkly smiling face, with the eyes close-set, but fiery with intelligence, is the pleasantest of memories. Ryder was definitely one of the twice-born. He had thought long and fruitfully on whatever is fundamentally interesting and agitating to men, and though he had as many prejudices as you or I, he was the essence of the just-minded. Brought up in the thick shadow of Andover Theological Seminary, religion in its most unpalatable form had been early thrust upon him. He had suffered all the revulsions and anxieties which seem to trouble New England very little now, and the rest of the country not at

all. In his loving study of the Sanskrit poets and prophets, he had discovered answers and antidotes to the severe theses of the narrow Theocracy. And I never have read in my life a more exciting and diverting paper than his unpublished essay on religion. It was the sort of thing that would have warmed the cockles of the heart of William James, and, though no doubt influenced by him, was a wholly individual achievement. Ryder believed that there are three types of persons, as far as the religious experience is concerned. First, there are the religious, people with a definite talent for the knowledge of God, of whom, perhaps fortunately, there are seldom more than seven or eight loose on the planet at once. Second, there are the pagans, the great mass of mankind, who do not give much thought to the matter, tend strictly to business, and have such a respect for the rare religious figure as a small-town lawyer may have for a great physicist. Third, there are the pious, unhappily too numerous, who, in James's phrase, "flirt with God on Sundays" and ignore him the rest of the week, when they devote their attention to making trouble for less complex natures. Starting from this classification Ryder had erected a system of thought that to me was actively attractive. There was nothing mealy-mouthed or half-hearted about it. It strengthened your admiration for saints and your contempt for ecclesiastical bureaucracies. I had never been bothered essentially by such matters, but I think it was good for me to know a man who had been and had emerged.

But religion was only one of Ryder's concerns. No man was more interesting to talk with about poetry, though it would be hard to say which he would have frightened most, radical or reactionary. His tastes were often as curious as Dr. Johnson's. Thus he was the only man I have known in all these times, who was competent to form an opinion, and who preferred Vergil to Homer. He was enchanted by the Romans' artistic perfection, and, admitting their magnifi-

cence, held that the Homeric epics were stories for boys. Vergil was grown up, and so far superior. Tolstoi was a god to him and became so to me. Goethe he did not admire, calling him in the words of his friend MacDonald "a local celebrity." It would be overstating it to say that he disliked Dante, but he was pleased because Anatole France called him "un étrusque." He liked the connotations of the word which are definitely denigrating. Samuel Johnson he adored in Boswell and out, and he knew the great paraphrases of Juvenal almost by heart. And I am sure it would have embittered his soul to find himself in agreement on that point with T. S. Eliot. Finally, Emerson was for him the greatest of our poets. And though in many matters I have, for one reason or another, ceased to accept his views, in this instance he seems to me to have stated what it is a mistake to deny.

At what appears to be the opposite pole, Ryder cultivated an almost passionate interest in science, with which I am happy to say he infected me. He was always turning up with books like Soddy's *Interpretation of Radium* or Whitehead's *Mathematics*. And he was the first man to point out to me a dreadful paradox concerning the times, namely that men use the fact that there is so much to know as an excuse for knowing nothing. He made it clear that never before had it been so easy to perceive the outline and drift of the sciences. Yet those who have the opportunity are precisely those who do not wish to inform themselves. The multitude of the incurious is a problem and a curse. Ryder was never a member of that multitude.

His learning in his own field was Gargantuan, as his magnificent translations attest. His version of the "Panchatantra" was actually a best-seller. And when they put on his rendering of *The Little Clay Cart*, it was a Broadway hit, and apparently created in modern New York much the same emotion as in ancient Ujjain. Ryder's recreation of the

Hindu classics in English will be his monument, but I hold a brief for his original poetry, which George Noyes is now editing. It is an odd sort of poetry, humorously didactic often and full of irony, but to me powerful and penetrating. His views, which to many seemed merely those of a sore-headed recluse, were to me truth not cynicism, and he could get them into epigrammatic form as well as the next man.

*They of the inquisition prayed
To him of Galilee.
The renaissance of learning made
A university.*

It must have been in January of a year when no one dreamed that an archduke would be shot in May and a million peasants in August, that I formed a cometary friendship which was real, but brief for reasons beyond my control. Chauncey Welles invited us to dinner. A young Englishman had come with letters of introduction from Russel Loines. And it appeared that he was a person of some promise. His talk was delightful, and we were all old friends before we got to the meat course. The young man's name, totally unknown at the time, was Rupert Brooke.

I don't suppose any poet has had more harm done him by friendly critics and over-zealous photographers than Rupert Brooke. I should never recognize the Brooke I knew in the heart-broken dithyrambs of the one party or in the strange posed sepia-prints of the other. In a desperate time like 1914 real passions make men take refuge in unreal ones, and people who were really fond of him foisted on Brooke's memory their own Shelleyan or Byronic fantasies. The semi-religious tone of voice in which people spoke of him would have made him spit poison. And such a picture was drawn as halfway explains the present and very silly tendency to undervalue him. Halfway only, and I admit being annoyed recently when a young man, secure in the knowledge that

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the opinions of 1938 came down on tables of stone from Mt. Sinai, lumped Brooke casually with the other imbeciles of the time.

The Brooke I knew was as handsome a man as need be, but his beauty was by no means so striking as his perfect physical strength and grace. You could tell at a glance that he was a Rugby player. In five minutes you were aware of humor, rich, piquant, and frequently Rabelaisian. There was absolutely nothing of the maladjusted in his nature, no moonstruck melancholy, nothing that belongs to the artist's incapacity to endure the world. He loved poetry and he took it seriously, but he claimed no extra consideration on that ground. And he was fun at all times. Mrs. Cornford's fine lines about him don't fill the bill from my standpoint. The really swank antithesis,

*Magnificently unprepared
For the long littleness of life,*

seems to me to miss entirely the gift of getting on with all kinds of people, that I thought, and think, he had.

All through his two visits to Berkeley on his way to and from the South Seas, I saw a great deal of him. We dined together, we foregathered at Mr. Gayley's, and he even, at my request, read some of his poetry to English 106, who sat like mice while he rolled out verses that within a year were on every man's lips. To me he was a perpetual fountain of interest, for he brought me news, so to say. He was thick as thieves with the whole new school. And it was good to get authentic tidings of poets like Hodgson, Davies, Abercrombie, and de la Mare, of whom only rumor had as yet reached the Coast. Brooke looked on de la Mare as the bright particular star. Of course he was right. At any rate it was pleasant to tell de la Mare in 1936 what Brooke had said about him in the year of the breaking of nations.

Brooke had a splendid time in the South Seas, and though

much nonsense is uttered by people who should know better, about the effect (impact they call it) of deserts vast and antres idle, I think those atolls evidently gave him something, if only leisure to collect himself. He wrote some fine poetry there, and he picked up or invented a yarn of a young Englishman who was elected honorary king of some tribe of Solomon Islanders or Fijians. The loyal subjects called for a speech from the throne, a mere compliment, for neither side knew the other's language. He read them two pages of a novel by Henry James, which was received with cheers, I fancy for the first time on any stage. Brooke tasted with equal pleasure the Canadian legend about the Duke of Connaught's perfect behavior, when the Doukhobors went nudist, as a result of a prophecy that the day of judgment was at hand, and took the son of Queen Victoria in his field-marshal's uniform for the Prince of Peace. The embarrassment of a governor-general, when naked persons of both sexes swarmed about his horse and kissed his stirrups, suggests that the old order must necessarily change.

Twenty-four years, it is quite possible, might conceivably dim recollection. But I have a sufficiently clear picture of him still, never to accept the god-awful imitation of a great nature trumped up by zealots. I remember too much of the verses he recited and the cracks he got off. And one thing, of course, is in my head as if it had been burned in. He liked my poem "Sarvachraddên" which he had seen in the *Century*, and he told me so. Not everyone has been complimented viva voce by Rupert Brooke, and I make my boast proudly.

On August 3rd, 1914, he wrote me a letter from which these sentences are taken: "One's heart is too heavy to write. I hope you're having a good time. I wish I had seen you again. I shall, perhaps, next year?" The question mark with which a sentence declarative in form concludes, I fear I did not immediately notice. Another letter arrived out of the

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tumult, dated strangely enough, November 11th, 1914, four years to a day from the tentative cessation of the struggle. It retailed the horror of the Naval Brigade's march out of Antwerp, a city on fire from end to end, and the long lines of refugees along the Scheldt under the burning petroleum tanks. That was my last word from the brilliant and mirthful creature before he vanished into the onrushing shadow of the Dark Ages.



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A FEW hours after Brooke dashed off his letter to me on the 3rd of August, the war began for me too, though in a different manner, where my life had begun, in the Works at Solvay. We had been staying in the village on our way west, when the news of the attack on Liège came through. It might be imagination, but I seemed to notice a perceptible variation in the rhythm of the great factory. Nonplussed engineers and executives came out of their offices, looking bewildered. The connection of forty years' standing with the parent Belgian Company was visibly broken in that moment. It might be a small instance, but it was clearly the severing of one fiber in the huge economic umbilical cord that still connected the United States with Europe. Whatever the present relation between us, it is now of a wholly different character. And if the war did anything it emphasized contrasts on both sides of the Atlantic.

The present intellectual attitude toward the war leaves me very cold indeed. That every party to the struggle had been guilty and foolish is no doubt true, but that every party had been equally guilty and foolish, I for one do not believe. I am sorry there was a war, which of course is very nice of me. I hope there will be no other (silly hope as two

are raging as I write), which is nicer still. But I am firmly convinced, things being what they were, that if we had not fought, we should have been enslaved. The only fortunate result of the struggle is the fact that the ideal of individual freedom continues to exist in England, in France, and in the United States. It would not exist anywhere, if Germany had had her way. The hateful eagerness with which they have riveted their own chains is ample proof of the eagerness with which they would rivet the chains of others.* The treaty that protracted the hatreds is, of course, too awful an example of recklessness even to criticize. Two rival gangs of bootleggers would have worked out a fairer solution. But no one will ever persuade me that the war was the result of a plot of bankers, munition-makers, and diplomats, who betrayed their virtuous peoples into horror and despair. Peoples are not necessarily virtuous. The war was in fact simply the crash of irreconcilable philosophies based on medieval racial desires. Wiser statesmanship might have softened the acerbities, but if men were the way they were in 1914, then the fight was inevitable. And in such a cosmic conflict it is absolutely necessary to choose a side. The moral mountain peaks to which honorable but, I think, misguided men like Romain Rolland retired, as they put it, "above the battle," seem to me the most desolate and inhuman places I have ever heard of. There are just two things to be done with respect to the most hateful thing in the world, which is physical violence. One may submit entirely, or one may resist *à l'outrance*. But no one ever talked the violent out of their violence. Or if he did, he had a preponderance of artillery. There are three great powers today, who only understand the unrhetorical last argument of Kings. And our Pacifists and Isolationists might just as well be on the payroll of the Dictator-powers. At any rate they are giving

* This was written before the Pact of Munich. It is truer than before.

active aid and comfort to the enemies of our belief, with Spain and China as an example of what we may expect.

One immediate effect of the horror beyond the sea was a stimulation of things in general in the university. It seemed to wake from its routine, perhaps into a delirium, but at any rate it was wildly awake, at least to exterior excitement. That autumn a club called the "Sphinx" came into being, where undergraduates and younger faculty members met on terms of most satisfactory equality, and every issue was bolted to the bran. The discussions there remain to me something thrilling. That we ever arrived at proper solutions of anything is more than doubtful. But it was something to have discussed the matters at all in that sort of free parliament. Tom Hines battling with Moritz Bonn, who had presented the German case, was worth hearing. Alone, before as hostile an audience as a man can encounter, Bonn defended a cause we all hated, with spirit and courtesy. I for one respected him. He cannot live in the Germany he sought to serve, and which will be ill enough served one day. Also there was the strange, attractive, inarticulate Carl Parker, who spoke in catch-phrases, as if it were against the law to supply a subject with a predicate. I thought of him as all sail and no hull, which is a poor rig for economic seas, but he kept things exciting. And the boys ate out of his hand. The wild talk about war, and economic reform, and philosophy, was no doubt ignorant or academic, but at least it set up uneasy eddies in the mind. The pre-war calm may have been only calm in appearance; but few of us who took it for granted have had occasion to take anything for granted since.

Two years slipped by in an atmosphere of increasing excitement. One did one's stint as usual but grew more and more passionate. Selden Rose and I made some pretense to normality. With a delightful old Greek scholar named Joralemon we read the *Odyssey* through, something that gave all

three of us unusual pleasure. And beyond that Rose and I undertook and completed our translation of the *Cid*, the national saga of Spain. It is the strangest of epics, for it is completely devoid of the marvelous. It is as realistic as a modern novel. No horn is heard seventy-five leagues. No fantastic exploit beyond the powers of a strong and skilful soldier is even mentioned. Yet the poem is a poem and a fine one too. And it was sport to do it with Selden. Happy collaboration is like happy marriage. And it was certainly fortunate to have such a resource while the country drifted nearer and nearer to the maelstrom.

Drift we did and private excitement kept pace with public. Our eldest daughter was born on April 2nd, 1917, the day that Wilson took the step. And I was almost immediately rejected as military material on the ground of imperfect sight.

I suppose I must have felt a strange relief. But it was followed by a horrible sense of shame that I was barred out. The madness had taken hold of everyone. We had been bitten by the tarantula. Anything to get in. I put in most of the summer in a blundering attempt to learn Russian in the hope that it would help me to go places. I have forgotten every word and the very letters, but there was a moment when I could totter staggering through not too intricate passages. And I actually translated a long stretch of Pushkin's *Battle of Poltava* into English verse. The poem is Scott with a Slavic accent, but more beautiful and quite as spirited. Russian, contrary to received opinion, is not harder than other languages. And the books for beginners, like Boyer and Speranski's, are better and more scientific than the elementary works on which we break our teeth in the Western tongues. Also I thought it a beautiful language, almost as beautiful as English, and perfect for poetry.

Nothing came naturally of that project. But Hiram Bingham turned up in Berkeley and told me I could get a job

on the ground in the air service, in spite of my eyes. I tried the State Department first, and then took Hiram at his word, though I foresaw the clerkship in a bureau that was for a while my fate.

Before I enlisted in Washington, I saw one remarkable sight, Wilson and his cabinet walking through the streets of the city at the head of the Washington draft. In a straw hat, blue tennis-jacket, and white trousers, the President marched in front of six or eight thousand men, as if it were a peace-time procession. The men were still in their civilian clothes. At the rear of the procession came hundreds of negroes, who serpentine and danced, as if it were the gayest moment of their lives. Most of the white men seemed to take it easily too, but Africa was riotous. There was something portentous about that. And Wilson's face was worth seeing at the moment. There was no smile on it.

But I think there is occasion to smile, wily perhaps, at a very minor interlude. At the Kosmos Club and at the breakfast table, I encountered a serious-minded acquaintance who was on the staff of one of the intellectual weeklies. Over the orange-juice I asked him what he was doing in Washington. With an air of irresistible dignity and an expression devoid of humor he replied: "I have come down to watch the War Department." It seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, that he might as well have served notice on the Great Nebula in Andromeda that it had better behave or take the consequences. All the futility and sterility which have bankrupted our well-bred liberalism said their say in that naïve sentence. And it has since been difficult for me to give to publications like that which he represented "such attention as they now and then deserve."

In a skyscraper office I presented my papers to a board consisting of a grumpy major and a smiling captain, who were to pass on my qualifications. I was sure that I had never laid eyes on them, but their faces were as familiar as those

of dear friends. I racked my brains and suddenly had it. They were the great tennis-players Larned and Wrenn, whose faces I had seen in the sporting-pages for fifteen or twenty years. Tilden and Budge won't see me into the next battle. Under such auspices, before I knew it I was enlisted and in Toronto with a squadron of signal-corps troops, who were being ground fine in the British mill.

I am still grateful for the violence done my mind by the Royal Flying Corps. Nothing I knew from books or had learned from experience was of the faintest value whatever. I was a babe thirty years old, incompetent with respect to every single aspect of the new life. The entrails of motors and machine-guns, the rigging of aeroplanes, the effort involved in mastering Morse Code, such things discovered my nakedness. I suppose I am as vain as the next man, but for fourteen months my vanity only existed in the unsatisfactory form of a capacity for humiliation. And the foundations of that state of mind were well and truly laid in Canada. Not once in my classes in Berkeley did I ever discover a student as stupid as I felt myself to be in Toronto. It was like being a mollusc into whose shell sharp pebbles are inserted. Nor did I see any prospect of converting those pebbles into pearls, as is the manner of efficient oysters. I was as unhappy as in my worst days at boarding-school, but this time I had no one to blame but myself, for I got on well enough with my comrades. There wasn't a trace of physical discomfort, but I lived a nightmare of incompetence and inadequacy and thought of those six weeks as a foretaste of hell. To this day I regard a telegraph-key (Morse was the real scourge) as an instrument of Satan. It was a bad moment in the war too. For one morning the news of Caporetto was shouted along the sidewalks as we marched to breakfast. And it did not occur to me that there might be soldiers in the world even more bewildered than I. Of the very few bright spots only one is worth recalling—

my first venture into the air. An amiable pilot at Armour Heights took me up for ten minutes. And timid as I have always been and frightened as I was, when I looked out of an Immelmann turn at the horizon of Lake Erie, where I expected to see Toronto beneath me, the exhilaration and the wild sense of power overcame my feeble inhibitions.

However gloomy Toronto, save for that interlude, may have been, it was a summer vacation compared with Washington. There I arrived toward the end of November, 1917, and was duly commissioned a second lieutenant. I took it very seriously indeed, and full of new responsibility started for my lodgings. My path led past the White House and I was deep in troubled thought. There came a sharp military clank and a rattle that roused me from my muse. The sentry at the White House gate was presenting arms—at me. Before I could salute my heel slipped on the icy pavement and I executed such an entrechat as would have been the envy of Nijinsky. It took me some time to see anything funny or symbolic about the episode.

The capital was more than ever a madhouse—an expanding cancer of bureaus that conflicted and overlapped and were overwhelmed by their own size. The air service, which in April had consisted of a hundred officers and twelve hundred men, was now in November made up of twenty thousand commissioned and a hundred thousand enlisted lunatics. The mere increase in the number of telephones (a hundred thousand new instruments had been installed in a few months) was a magnificent invitation to chaos. My K. O. one morning told me to get in touch with a sick officer at the Walter Reed Hospital. It took me four mortal hours to put through a city call. By ten in the morning the telegrams were a foot high on such unimportant desks as mine. And imagination boggles before the anxieties of essential men, if I found my small difficulties so intense. One thing I rise bitterly to deny. The story of the swivel-chair officer who

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wore spurs to keep his feet on the desk is wholly without foundation. I myself was more often than not on duty for sixteen hours at a stretch. I don't think I averaged more than four hours' sleep for eight weeks. And I know that everyone from the weary-eyed generals and colonels to the wilted stenographers looked as harried and strained as I felt. One died of exhaustion, and nothing got done. One gave one's very best, and did very badly indeed. I can see now that it was in the nature of the case, and in the very nature of war. But at the time I thought it was all my fault and that I was fully as useful as a German spy. It was not a comforting thought, when one reflected that inefficiency in Washington could breed a pestilence in Texas or kill our own men in France.

It is the fashion to wail about the ineffectiveness of democracies as contrasted with more rigid forms of government. Any totalitarian state in the mess we were in would have had the red revolution in a week. We ultimately got out of it. Whereas they are simply hell bent to get into it, and will whenever they stub their autarchic toes. Only one man ever doubted of victory in my presence, and he had been worn down by three months on the seemingly stationary wheel of which he and I were agonized cogs. Nine men out of every ten were working as they did not know they could work, and not because of any bloody major. What shamed and hurt was one's own criticism rather than being bawled out, though that is no fun either. And I know that the kind of self-sacrifice I saw all around me was something that cannot be ordered up. If it comes it comes of its own accord.

I touched the bottom dead-center of humiliation when my much troubled Major, towards whom I nourish no rancor, hung what I still think was his error on me—not that it makes much difference who was to blame. It was a useful experience to me, for it shattered such self-esteem as I had

been able to retain and brought me face to face with what could not be escaped. I was ejected from his department as a servant is discharged. It was something about orders for six pilots. And the sense of colossal and guilty failure stayed with me for several years. One should know that sense sometime or other. But the amusement connected with such an episode is definitely limited in intensity.

The mere existence of the bureau, into which I was discreditably precipitated from my previous molehill, was a disgrace to the nation. Its very name gave it away. It was called the Bureau of Congressional Correspondence. And the duties of the unfortunate *ronds-de-cuir*s in uniform who worked in it were to prevent senators and congressmen from using undue influence. That it took five officers to protect the Signal Corps from interference by legislators with respect to promotion and jobs, seems to me a comment on our system hateful enough to satisfy those who hate us most. The foul constricting pressure never relaxed. And the demands of our representatives were literally obscene. A New York congressman over the telephone threatened to "get" a colonel of my acquaintance who refused to promote one of the congressman's protégés. My intimate friend by prearrangement with the colonel was listening in on the conversation. That threat was not carried out. Our files were as filthy a brew of dishonesty and intrigue as heart could desire. It was like touching pitch to read the vile letters. But my captain, who was philosophical, pointed out that it served the country and did not defile our hands. This to comfort me when the friend of some legislator did me the honor of first cajoling and then menacing me, to no purpose. You can't get the blood of promotion in useful quantities out of a second lieutenant.

What got you down in Washington was strained monotony, persistent dull tension, with now and then a dash of the acidly dramatic. One might get used to telegraphing people

that their sons had been killed, but it wasn't a pleasant duty on Christmas Day, 1917. I wanted to hold it up a day and let them have their parties in a fool's paradise. Not so my captain, who, in the classic phrase, had made a fine recovery from any attack of the sentimental he may have suffered. Something a great deal more important broke on a particularly nasty Sunday afternoon. I was fumbling with my perpetual telegrams. Another shavetail was in command of the building, and he and I were alone in the dim offices when a code message came in. It had all the clarity of a Yucatan inscription. He asked me what I thought he had better do. "Telephone the Colonel." "O hell, let him have his Sunday," he said. An hour or so later as I labored vainly on, I grew aware of a shadow above me. It was the Colonel. I sprang to my feet in time to preserve the military amenities. And at a glance I saw that unless I lied quickly and well, that other lieutenant was going to get court-martialed. I managed it somehow. And I was sorry afterwards, for really the boy should have been killed. That unreadable wire gave notice of a blizzard and a meningitis and flu epidemic at one of the flying fields. For eighteen hours that luckless camp had been snowbound without sufficient blankets. And the local doctors having refused to assist, they had been without medical attention. War is productive of much which is not heroic or intelligent. Naturally the Colonel was in a fine field-officer taking. And my instinctive duplicity, a left-over from the schoolboy code, saved the skin of a fool. I wonder to what purpose. For various reasons I do not recall Washington with pleasure.

How or why I was ordered to Rockwell Field, San Diego, I do not know, though I fancied gloomily at the time that the idea was to get me as far away from Washington as was possible within the boundaries of the United States. I went by New Orleans, passing every fifty miles or so the cantonments which contained the embryo divisions of the great

armies. They looked squalid but dangerous in the rain, and I could not know in January, 1918, that the mere rumor of them was already breaking the heart of the German staff. A month before the armistice, an English intelligence officer told me that the war would be won for the Allies by the German Intelligence Service, whose wonderful reports, illustrated with photographs, about the enormous reserves in America shattered the spirit of Ludendorf. From what I saw from my pullman window, I can easily believe it. I hope a couple of tin-horn Napoleons, now the chief causes of anxiety on the planet, know that the huge crescent of camps from New York to El Paso could be re-established if necessary.

I was a brief moment in Berkeley. It was strange and lovely to see one's family if only for a day or two. As per order, I inspected the ground school, much as a blind man might inspect a Titian. It was already twice as complex as the Canadian affair at Toronto and four times as complex as it needed to be. But that is the American way. While I examined the establishment, one of the few things I found amusing in that hateful epoch befell me. The draft had picked up my name as a deserter, as it picked up the names of most men who volunteered away from home. In full uniform with boots and spurs complete, I entered the draft office, and desired to have my name removed from the list of fugitives. I had a grotesquely strong impression that the phthisical civilian clerk who complied with my request was afraid that I might kill him, unless he acted promptly. It was one of the few occasions in my career when I have been conscious of inspiring terror, and the more diverting because I had no such intention. The engaging and remarkable author of *High Wind in Jamaica* has pointed out that few states of mind are more satisfactory. I have known it too little.

My operations at Rockwell Field at first went as badly as

in Washington. I had been sent out as an expert, an expert, mark that, on co-operation between artillery and airplanes. My qualifications were the fact that I had been ten minutes in a plane, had passed through a ground school, had seen field-guns go by on parade, and had read a four-page French military pamphlet on the problem, which had been magnificently mistranslated, apparently by a Washington debutante. Nevertheless within twenty-four hours of my arrival in San Diego I was teaching a subject of vital importance of which I knew nothing whatever to boys who might kill a thousand of their own men if they didn't learn it. It is awful to know nothing and be ordered to tell what you know to persons who are going into the certainties of battle. Without theoretical knowledge, without practical experience, I lived in a nightmare—all the more a nightmare, because you could find nowhere the all-important information. The work I was doing must be valueless at best, I knew it, and I had too much naïveté, or too little humor, to see that almost everyone else was in the same boat.

At the end of ten days I went to the executive officer, Martin Ray, and exposed the situation in a mixture of passion and grief, such as I have seldom given vent to. It was one of the wisest things I ever did in my life, for there and then I found out what a good commander can be. He was the most overworked man on the field, and beyond all doubt the best and ablest. He knew quite as well as I that a man cannot teach what he does not know, and he took immediate steps to help me to know. I was so broken at the moment that I wanted to resign my commission and make room for a better man. In five common-sense minutes he had me calmed down and my morale re-established. "When you have made a mistake, don't let it happen again," was the bitterest thing he said to me. Trite it may sound, but not so at that moment. After that there were very few cannons' mouths I wouldn't have looked into, if it had occurred to

Ray as a good idea, though my natural disposition is not in that direction. Within a day or two he and I were at Camp Kearney together watching an artillery problem, a whole blessed day on horseback in the open. He drove me out in a side-car, and ditched us magnificently on the way home, when something gave way on the bike. Why we weren't killed I do not know. I didn't find out till twenty years later that he had never ridden a motorcycle till the day before. That was like him exactly.

From that day forward he paid me the only form of compliment in which he ever indulged. It is a most inconvenient form. Kipling speaks of it somewhere. He added job after job to my collection, till I had five offices, in all of which I was magnificently industrious and correspondingly inefficient. Yet things did get done. For he possessed a gift which indicates that something is wrong about Newton's laws. He could get more out of a man than had been put into him. Because of Martin Ray, I, who never understood a blue-print or an electrical diagram, directed, not without success, the construction of a "miniature range" with an elaborate fifteen-by-twenty pictorial map, forty thousand feet of wire, eight hundred lights to simulate shell-bursts, and forty telegraph keys. With such incredible and useless toys were heroes instructed. But orders are orders. Part of that work I did with my own hands, whose fingers are all inadequate thumbs. Because of Martin Ray I got up in four hours a course in meteorology for a class of nine majors and one lieutenant colonel (one of the majors being John Purroy Mitchell and the colonel one of the present chiefs of the air service). That course, after continuous effort and much collaboration with a brilliant pupil of scientific tastes, wasn't much worse than other courses in meteorology. But it is difficult to teach people, your superiors in rank and perhaps in ability. How my Berkeley colleagues would have laughed to hear me hold forth on adiabatic cooling and

Ferrel's Law! Nevertheless for a while I understood such matters at least well enough to inform the not too curious minds of junior military aviators. John Purroy Mitchell, a man of intellect, got 94 in the examination, and was so pleased that he offered to take me for a joy ride. We couldn't get a ship. Everybody liked him and when he crashed at Lake Charles, there was grief in San Diego.*

I have never known a more curiously frank man than Mitchell. At San Diego he was still burning with rage over his defeat by Hylan and Hearst, and to me, a man casually encountered at a military post, he poured out the story of his wrongs, peppered with grim remarks about Arthur Brisbane. One anecdote may be recorded. After the election, at a small stag dinner in Washington, Brisbane boasted that he had beaten Mitchell by playing up the mayor's intimacy with some member of the Vanderbilt family. He added cynically that he wasn't even certain that Mitchell knew the Vanderbilt in question. A guest at the dinner turned to the host and asked him what he meant by inviting Brisbane to dine with gentlemen, which must have been a difficult moment even for Brisbane. Mitchell's eyes shone with pleasure as he related the story. And certainly, if it be true, it is very satisfactory. It is well to remember Mitchell, for, though he died a disappointed man, men who knew and loved him ultimately tied the knot he dreamed of in the Tiger's tail.

If Ray made me a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, he also made me a pigeon-fancier and a radio officer. I am a lover of birds with the exception of pigeons, creatures who have the morals of the House of Thebes and filthy diseases. They are not even good to eat. My colleagues

* By a strange coincidence this sentence was written on July 19th, 1938. On the 20th in the morning papers, I read the account of the ceremonies at Mitchell's grave in New York. I had forgotten the date altogether. I wrote twenty years after almost to the minute, perfectly unconscious that it was an anniversary.

kidded the life out of me in the officers' mess when that singular duty was thrust upon me.

To this day I wonder who the imbeciles were, who wished those birds on the air service and the gas army. Doubtless they have their reward, and I hope it's only a captain's half-pay. A god-awful nuisance those hundred "squeakers" came to be. Twice I nearly came to a sticky end because of the unamiable things. The whole business was ludicrous, as I bitterly reflected, while I sat astride the ridge-pole of the Hotel Coronado throwing pebbles at them to prevent illegal landings in a training flight. And I have launched them from a plane in a side-slip (it has to be done in a slip, or they will hit the empennage and be killed), while another ship side-slipped beside us with four feet between the wings, so as to get a photograph of me illustrating the technique. At four thousand feet, with the ships trembling like maple-keys in the slip scarcely a yard from each other, the business had elements of terror. And we didn't have parachutes then. A tourbillon, too abrupt a motion of the joy stick, and the four of us would have been done. I know the spotlighted center of the drama was so scared that orders were the only thing that carried him through. But I wasn't solitary, for so was my pilot. As soon as the photographer, who was almost near enough to have spat on us, signaled he was done, my calm Scandinavian child, with the nerves of vanadium-steel, fell like lightning out of the slip into a half-mile power-dive. He had had quite as much as he wanted of that region of unstable horror. I've never been shot at, but I don't see how it could frighten a man more than being photographed on those terms.

Radio was different. The theory of it excited my mind, which, the reader may have noticed, derives a jackdaw satisfaction from bright and enigmatic matters. As usual, except for two battered, obsolete, French airplane-transmission sets, wholly inadequate for our necessities, we had no equipment.

My orders were to give three hundred cadets an hour apiece sending Morse from the air. In despair I consulted the radio officer of the Naval District, a highly trained and fascinating expert in charge of the six-hundred-foot towers of the San Diego Station, and a man and a brother, if there ever was one. When he took in the situation, he told me that in my place he should do nothing whatever, except damn Washington's eyes and tell them to send us equipment. But he also informed me that one could insert a key and an antenna in the ignition circuit of an airplane-motor, and be heard forty miles with suitable receiving apparatus. Little did he know how his charity would be repaid. We tried the system out on a motor in the repair-shops. When we found that it only killed 10 per cent of the power with the key pressed down, we installed it in a ship, and my pilot took me up to try it out. For an hour I circled above Point Loma, sending "Hark, hark the lark!" "Drink to me only with thine eyes," and such other classic verses as casually occurred to me. In due course we came down, but not before I had been nearly knocked out by the swellest electric shock I have ever had. Also, I lost the antenna, when I reeled it in for fear of ships passing too near us and then let it go out too fast. The lead weight and three hundred feet of copper wire hit the sea and it was as if a whale had been killed. At the moment I wished it had struck headquarters. When I reached my office, I found that the men on the ground had picked my selected Elizabethans out of the immaterial ether, together with matters none of us had expected. Flying as I had right above the Navy Station at Point Loma, I had, with the eight separate wave-lengths from my eight spark-plugs, effectively jammed their reception. They could not tune me out any more than static. Nor could they hear themselves think. And doubtless things of much interest to them were happening at sea. Accordingly my little experi-

ment was accompanied by an obbligator of fervent and profane appeals urging whoever it was who had run mad in the firmament to get off the air and stay off. I suppose that was the first and perhaps the last time that the Navy ever heard "Hark, hark the lark!" It pleases me to think of the confusion of mind it must have produced in some yeoman first-class, who may yet be wondering about the horns of Elfland in halting Morse faintly blowing into his ear-phones.

Rockwell Field exhibited one aspect of the army I am glad I saw—military justice. I woke up one morning and found myself a member of a court-martial with a case of desertion—bloody serious. I thought there was one circumstance that counted for the prisoner. He was guilty all right, but he had deserted some time before war was declared, had been picked up by the draft, and was now being tried in an atmosphere of general fury. Accordingly, when, as junior member of the court, I gave my opinion first before a dozen officers of superior rank, I recommended the minimum sentence, seven years. One after another each in his turn said I was a softie, inquired if I knew there was a war, and urged the limit. They gave me a severe talking-to and him twenty-three years. I felt badly for both reasons. A month later the Judge Advocate of the Department reviewed the case and gave the man the minimum sentence. I felt it was a sort of private triumph for me against those disciplinarians. But somehow a second lieutenant rarely says yah-yah-yah to a bunch of majors.

Twenty years after the pictures of Rockwell Field still seem to me extraordinarily detailed and luminous. It is as if my senses took in at this moment the long row of mean but efficient buildings, the air full of a perpetual belling roar. My first cross-country flight with the snow and sapphire of the San Bernardino range on one hand, the ocean, etched with the hairlines of a million waves, filling the

gigantic horizon to the West. The drums and tramlings of a review for an English general, whose visit set necessary work back twenty-four hours. The officer in charge of flying, leaping over a table at a board meeting, when the klaxon blew not for one but for two simultaneous accidents. Falling myself in a plane whose motor quit in a go-degree bank a hundred and fifty feet off the ground. How we came out of that could be explained, but I don't see how. More ghastly still, coming down in the fog and the dark, an everlasting two minutes, before a magnificent sock on the nose and the scream of the wrenching spars convinced us that one should flatten before landing at eighty per. Both of us were knocked silly that time. Rescuing Bishop Lawrence and a party of clergy from a Tcheko-Slovak sentry who was sure they were German spies. No bishop was ever gladder to see a man who had once met him. A prizefight, refereed by Ray, between Benny Leonard and Willie Meehan, who had once stayed the steep course of Jack Dempsey's morning star. While fifteen hundred cheered, Meehan, a desperate hippopotamus, positively outran an embittered panther. The moment when, like Falstaff, I stopped my Ford "upon instinct" just in time not to roll into an airplane, as it "magoofed" in the post street, between the buildings and two yards from the car. The holiday, the first and only one, when the proofs of two of my books written far away and long ago arrived on the same mail. They were the second edition of the *Song of Roland* and the *Cid*. It was like getting letters from a man after he has died, but they were perhaps appropriate to the times. A filthy week when I commanded the cadet camp during the removal of the post to a point farther down the field and was never once clean below my collar. And finally three days of serio-comic martyrdom when I cleared the post, and, judging by the severe attitude of the disingenuous quartermaster, must have stolen two-thirds of the accountable property, he himself having

swiped most of my gold-medal cots. Like the British officer I had owned enough property to have my own war—a young man who had great possessions. I came near going away very sorrowful, but for a different reason.

The radio school at Columbia University received me into its impersonal bosom. The work was horribly hard for an imperfect physicist who hardly knew an ohm from a commutator. But it was almost like leisure after the drive which the genius of Ray (it was nothing less) had transmitted to the least cog at Rockwell Field. I even had a couple of twenty-four-hour leaves. One of these I spent at Peace Dale, where the local Liberty Loan Committee pled with me to speak to the people. In the torch-lighted square at Wakefield I exhorted the populace, which I shouldn't have done in uniform. I hated it from my heart. At the end of a few commonplaces I ceased. Some little boys surged up to the lighted desk where the blanks were exposed to be signed by patriots. They dragged and pushed a larger lad, whom they urged with threats and promises to put his name down. I had seen the tall boy's face frequently before, in times when one might go to the country club to play tennis. He was the village idiot. Even he had made money out of the War. And even a second lieutenant could see the irony.

As I said the work at Columbia was hard. Two years at an electrical engineering school were crowded into two months on Morningside Heights. Running tests on batteries, or working on purposely imperfect sets in a freezing wind in Van Courtlandt Park, one could meditate on how ill one was prepared for the 1919 drive. I didn't care much either about examinations I could not pass. They didn't bother another officer. He cheated without shame and conspicuous success. It didn't get him far. A year later he was murdered for his boots by semi-tropical savages. More exciting was a lecture by Michael Pupin, as brilliant and vital a man as I ever knew. All I remember of the lecture were two sentences

delivered with such impressiveness that they stuck. "Gentlemen, I knew Joseph Henry. He gave up being a great man of science to become head of the Smithsonian and to fight Congressmen for his country." The last I had done myself and I sympathized. Pupin was a taking creature. In conversation with me after the armistice, he said: "We Serbs want a King and a Hero, not a college professor." He was one of the greatest electrical engineers that ever was born, but half of him sang songs about Kossovo Fight and the curse of Tsar Lazar on Vuk Brankovich.

A month before the armistice an English army officer told me that the end was in sight, but it was like being told that we had reached the bottom of the depression. I went grimly on my way among the mysteries of alternating current. Then about three, of an Indian summer afternoon, I came out from a class into declining light. Someone said to me gently, as if in a sick-room, "It's over." I, who had seen no blood, except what came out of my pilot's nose and my own in a minor crash, could hardly be said to have a right to the indescribable feelings that possessed me. I must have sat five minutes, without motion or utterance and so confused in thought that one could not call it thought at all. Then something like a gravitational pull took hold of me and of every other person in sight. It was as if our lives depended on getting down town. Like lemmings, like caterpillars that feel a heliotropic thrill, we headed south. From 119th street to 40th street I walked through a city whose relief from strain and fear was already insanity before I reached the Plaza. Women screamed hysterical congratulations. A bright-eyed shopgirl seized me by both hands, absolutely shrieking: "Bully for you, Jack!" as if I had done it alone. Niagaras and Yosemite Falls of torn telephone books and ticker-tape came over the ledges of skyscrapers. The press at 40th and Fifth Avenue was murderous. And I personally pulled an elderly colonel, part of whose insignia had been torn off by mere

friction, out of the maelstrom. A man as tall as I could easily see fifty thousand heads at a glance between the Library and St. Patrick's. And through that mob gales of shrieking skatological mirth blew like trumpets. I had not known America could go off the deep end like that. Never before or since have I seen uncontrollable passion on so many faces. And a paradox which has been noticed before could be observed again, for that frantic hysterical leviathan of a mob hardly gave the equally frantic police a particle of trouble. One tiny instance. The police were trying to keep clear a lane toward Madison Avenue and had drawn a deadline. A woman crossed it and a hundred men took a step forward, as if she were Jeanne d'Arc and had to be followed. Above the bellow and roar, a vast Irish cop shouted to her imploringly: "O Sister, be a sport." She went back.

Deafened and footsore, I took refuge from the trampling and shouting in the Yale Club, normally a reasonably well-behaved and subdued establishment. At the head of the stair outside the lounge, on the tessellated marble pavement lay four lieutenant commanders, "like complete works of someone," and as dead to the world as is possible for emergency officers. Above them, perched nonchalantly on the balustrade, and as oblivious of them as they of him, an ensign (the navy as usual had stolen the show and was throwing its weight about) was delivering to all who chose to hear, an oration on the unhappy termination of his most recent love affair, whose breaking-off, or so he alleged, under the circumstances he regarded with complete indifference. In the rather baroque lounge a rather baroque Balkan officer, his cocoa-colored uniform blazing with decorations, contrived to look like an Assyrian King who had discovered what cocktails were for. Beside him, and absolutely fraternizing with him, British attachés lay at their ease, every shred of their stiffness dissolved in relief and alcohol. It would be easy to describe the scene as merely orgiastic. But that word

WAR?

was given the lie by the expression on every face in the room. Not a man but looked like Christian when his burden fell off. And there was a sob of released emotions in the gay voices. For a moment they were delivered from the body of this death.

About nine that evening the bitter intelligence that the news was false, or at any rate premature, went through crowds that vanished like breath from a glass. The glory departed. But four days later as I rose in the cold dawn at the club, I heard the froglike croak of whistles from the river-front. I took a taxi up town to the radio school. The streets were empty and it was as cold as the Eve of St. Agnes. Near Columbus Circle I saw a solitary man who blew eternally upon a red tin trumpet. *Cel cor ad lingue aleine*. It wasn't much like the horn of Roland. But this time the war was over.

Over? Though it be the limit of triteness to say so, it never could be over for the men who were in it, even so homeopathically as I. Everyone was changed by it for better or worse. It underlined virtues and vices. The wise came out wiser. The silly came out sillier. Consider, for example, the American Legion.* I lay no claim to being wise. I hope I am not silly, but as far as I am concerned the hateful business was a sort of terrible blessing. It jolted me out of academic ruts. I could no longer hold beliefs that had blinded me. I may not have learned much, but I learned something from fear, from humiliation, from failure. Merely growing up to the unexpected but necessary grace of admiring men, whom a year before I should have regarded as unhousebroken barbarians, had for me value impossible to overestimate. And I think better men than I left behind them in the bureau or the field snobbery of one sort or an-

* No organization which believes that the misfortunes of the many can be ended by paying large sums of money to the few, can escape this, or a worse condemnation.

other with which they could dispense to advantage. There had been horrible evils, death, wounds, pestilence, and famine. And more were to come, the treaty, the ghastly let-down in everything on the part of people who had suffered too much. But when I put off my uniform and got into a business suit and felt the strange tightness of garters, an odd symbol of liberty to me ever since, I wasn't sorry I had had a slight taste of that cup.

A few days after the armistice, a girl, the daughter of dear friends and herself dear, fell ill in New York. In two days flu was transmuted into "strep" pneumonia, before the new drugs, certain death. Doctor Rufus Cole said to me, when I asked too hysterically for more radical measures: "My dear boy, if there were anything to do, don't you suppose I'd do it?" Her family were wired for. And she lived long enough to recognize them. A little service was to be held in St. Thomas's and I, having just been discharged, was to accompany the family to California with the body. The father and mother were absolutely worn out from grief and watching. But they wanted someone to stay all night by the coffin in the Chapel of St. Thomas's. I was the girl's friend and slightly older contemporary, and they did me the honor. A sexton let me into the chapel about nine that night, and I stayed there till morning. I was so weary that I slept, and when I woke from time to time in the Gothic shadows, I had none of the ideas that people are supposed to have under such circumstances. Afterward it occurred to me that the episode was a genuine symbol of what had happened to the world. And I was not the only one who had known perishing beauty.

THE SOLDIER'S RETURN

IN JANUARY, 1919, when the Big Four sat down to make the Treaty, I sat down to teach English. My job may have been less important, but it was a great deal better done, in spite of the fact that a sort of hatred of teaching, always in the back of my mind, now began to come to the fore. A year or two after my arrival in Berkeley I was already growing dubious with respect to "English" as a subject. Latin is a subject, Physics is a subject, English Philology is a subject, but to me English Literature is not a subject at all, meaning by subject a systematic body of relevant material which can be divided into valid categories. Someone has said that most lectures and books on literature are merely organized gossip. And Chauncey Tinker improved on Shaw's epigram: "Those who can, do, those who can't, teach," "and (said Chauncey) those who can't teach anything else, teach English." Whether or no I am right in these views, which in part I derived from Arthur Ryder, I felt more and more that my work was mainly exploitation of my not too important private judgments.

Furthermore, there was an aspect of the work that I definitely disliked. My lectures on the whole were rather successful. The undergraduates seemed to like them. I had an

uneasy sense that I was developing a taste for adolescent adulation. It is an unpleasant thing to notice in yourself, and it leads to something still worse, a tendency, slight but visible, to seek applause. Now applause that comes for actual performance is the finest thing in the world, and no one ever had enough. But applause that comes for a wise-crack *ad hoc* is the most demoralizing thing in the world, and not at all difficult to obtain. The line is a very fine one, say at 3:30 of a soft spring afternoon, between keeping interest legitimately alive and developing some paradox which merely prevents the groundlings from going to sleep. I don't think I was any worse than the next man, but one makes one's errors. In fairness to myself, it is right to say that I loved the great writers on whom I lectured, and I tried to get others to love them. But there was always the doubt, by no means vague, whether or no the game was worth the candle.

And the work, I felt, was keeping me from what I really wanted to do. I burned up enough energy in a semester to write a volume. It ate me up. I broke down once in 1915 and again in 1921, real honest-to-God nervous crashes, which are much too common in universities. And I expressly warn anyone who wants to write not to look for his sinecure in any educational institution. If you fail at the work, they naturally fire you. If you succeed, they quite as naturally load you up. The celebrated academic leisure is a myth. As a general rule one works thirty-six hours out of every twenty-four. And if committees are added—! Now I was big with ambition. There was an epic poem on my desk (it is still there), which I thought had points, and I was dreaming of more worlds, whose conquest the academic indefinitely postponed.

What I had hitherto achieved still did not seem to justify the kind of hope I nourished. I was thirty-two when the war ended, and I could see for myself that one emaciated volume

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of incompetent original verse and three of verse-translation were not much to build on. I had had an occasional poem in magazines here and there. But either I was out of step with the times or my work had fallen off, for the editors were less cordial than in the bright dawn nine years before. In short, between work that grew daily more uncongenial and ambitions whose realization was prevented by that work, I had become a disillusioned prospector troubled by doubts about the existence of gold in the foothills of Parnes. And by gold I don't mean money.

Such thoughts, which are naturally uneasy, possessed me when I went east to the tenth anniversary of my class at New Haven. I bring this in because it had a strange interest to me. When we were graduated ten years before, there had been among us exactly one man who chose a military career. When we returned for the reunion, half the class had been in the service, and the amateur warriors were all exceptionally glad that they were alive. It was as if we had escaped from a shipwreck, and it acted on us strangely and pleasantly. No other jollification has ever struck me as so satisfactory. All sorts of perfectly natural reserves were dissolved. I have never seen men more at their ease, or been so myself. There was a gay frankness that was infinitely pleasing. One very rarely sees the collective animal when he is wholly agreeable. This time he was so to such a degree that the conventional inanities of the commencement ritual actually became delightful.

Also I encountered at that time one of the most interesting men in the world. I had begun with a colleague, a mathematician at Berkeley, to collect material for a History of Aviation. We planned a book that should be a book. And it is unfortunate that it fell through for various reasons, mainly bad ones. That year Mr. Orville Wright was given a degree at New Haven. I went to see him at the house of one

of the professors. And the upshot was that I stopped off at Dayton on my way west and spent the day with him.

No one ever had a more interesting day. The simple directness of a genius who had solved the greatest engineering problem in human history was an experience in itself. It takes one's breath away when a man tells you that he and his brother tossed a coin to determine which of them should go up first in the first successful power-driven plane. And nothing could be more exciting than his vivid account of Wilbur Wright's despair, when it appeared, from the experiments of Chanute, that motors immensely more powerful than were available or conceivable would be required. In an agony Wilbur Wright had cried out as he looked at the figures: "Men won't fly for a thousand years." "But," added his brother, "we were in the air eighteen months later." The mere record of their struggles with gliders, to the study of which they had been attracted by the writings of Lilienthal, took hold of me like a great poem. And it is good for my vanity to remember that I said something supremely silly about the wind-tunnel to the man who had invented it. Nor was the story of what took place in a provincial middle-western town, when the discovery finally ruffled the dove-cotes of European general staffs, without interest. For several hectic weeks, military attachés appeared, variously disguised but invariably instantly recognizable, to the mingled amusement and consternation of the Wrights, who lived the lives of the hunted in their own house. Those Prisoner of Zenda characters were merely diverting and ineffective. The real trouble came from American blacklegs who first tried to shake down the two Daedali and then founded great corporations.

The Wrights were so able and so modest that there is some danger that men will fail to recognize the full greatness of their achievement. Not only did they invent the idea of the warped wing, but out of mere ingenuity they created

the lightest engine that had ever been built. Apparently they knew hardly more about internal combustion motors than I do, when they undertook the construction of the most effective one till that hour designed. The intellectual audacity of two men who sold bicycles is not the least astonishing feature of the business. And it must be a god-awful thing to lie in bed on a hot night considering a globe circled in four days and a city laid waste in four minutes, as results of one's highly ingenious solution of a secular problem. I am glad they did it. But Air-Marshals Trenchard's observation in the House of Commons gives the other side of the medal: "It is a great pity that flying was ever invented."

A few days later I was back in Berkeley and almost immediately had a streak of luck. Between classes a colleague told me a story about an episode at Harvard. It was symbolic of the times and in its very essence satire. Ridiculous and trivial no doubt, but it acted like a detonator on me. Almost automatically I threw the story into Byronic ottava rima, a measure I had never written or dreamed of writing. It was like finding a nugget that betrays a hidden vein. In a week I had finished the "Banquet of the Poets," which had the superlative luck to win the favor of its principal victim, Miss Amy Lowell. She thought well enough of it to revenge herself by fathering her anonymous bantling, "A Critical Fable," on me. A flood of letters instantly flowed in, seriously compromising my academic routine. And my friends in the *Saturday Review* simply ignored my denials or hinted privately and in print that I was one of the most elegant liars of my time. I was within an ace of being bickerstaffed, like the poor astrologer who spent the rest of his life trying to prove he was not dead after Swift's circumstantial account of his demise. I succeeded in laying the ghost. A hint from Miss Bates was enough, and I accused Miss Lowell of her low intrigue in a rhymed letter to Henry Canby, and had on the whole the best of it. But even then she had the *aes*

triplex to write my Aunt Caroline Hazard, that she still believed me to be the author. I like lying on that great imaginative scale, because it takes personality, which she had overwhelmingly, however forgetful times may have treated her poetry.

"The Banquet of the Poets" had another admirer of whom I am discreetly proud. It was Paul Shorey, perhaps the greatest classical scholar of his time on this side the sea, and otherwise a universal genius. The creature looked like a Busch caricature of learning. In his sad-colored clothes you would have taken him for a gerund-grinder whose mind had never soared above anaphora in Procopius or similar diverting themes. Actually he was a bounding and ebullient genius whose mind was a whirlwind of mirth and learning. My Greek being sketchy, if it could be said to exist, I asked him one day, apropos of the odes of Cowley and Gray, what he could tell me of the odes of Pindar. He went visibly mad. A second later I was literally pinned against the wall. With his left hand he clutched my cravat and waistcoat. In his right he brandished a Teubner edition of the poet, from which he read in a rhapsodist's scream what I suppose must have been the Fifth Nemean, though I was too ignorant and rattled to be sure. He must have held me there by force seven or eight minutes, perfectly oblivious of the fact that I hardly understood one word, though I have never been more impressed by a more delightful enthusiasm. Sometime later he sent me a papal blessing on my satire, and for my edification a line from his travesty of "Locksley Hall," a poem very easily parodied and very deserving of parody. In eight scorching trochees he about summed up the 1920's.

O my Amy! O Spoon River! O Rabindranath Tagore!

Better men than I have thought that with a couple more like him the Classics need not have died.

Whatever my critics may say of my attempt to revive the

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Byronic satire, whether the work were well or ill done (and both points of view have been maintained by people I respect), that form of verse, and the mental state that begat it and continued from it, was a godsend to me. A part of my nature, whose existence I hardly suspected before the war, developed almost overnight. In no time at all I was active once more and full of a sense of something beginning. Since Byron died I don't suppose anyone has loved that stanza as I have, or written so much in it. I said something of my feeling about it a year or two later in *Ulug Beg*.

*My clumsy subtleties and ironies
Die as I write them. After all, why not?
I shall be dead one day, as Byron is.
Little care I! I have a heart as hot,
And though I lack that glorious verve of his,
My cantos are as long, my rhymes as agile,
And the goblet of my thought at least as fragile*

*As his slight beaker of Italian glass,
On whose curve burns Pompeian opalescence
Of wit forgotten, as though it never was
Here upon earth in bright and bodily presence.
Who reads Don Juan? If such beauty pass,
What shall become of my inferior essence?
I do not know at all—but none the less
I fancy I could hazard quite a guess.*

That the thing became almost a compulsive thought-form, like the ideas of space, time, and causation in Kant, is perhaps true. In the cant phrase I had to think that way, because that was the way I thought. I could not escape and did not desire to, but it seems to me now that it was in reality an emancipation. For Byron set me free from Morris and Kipling, and even from himself. Whatever he thought of my style and method, I discovered them by writing twenty-four thousand lines according to an ancient pattern. Nor will I

ever believe I was the worse for it, or that it did not help me when I tackled matters which seemed more difficult and perhaps more important.

It is hard to explain the fact that men often prepare themselves for what they could not possibly foresee. It was as if I had deliberately practised with the one weapon that could be used for a certain purpose and did not know the purpose. Certainly when one morning at Mission Hill I picked up a Sunday *Los Angeles Times*, the largest, thickest, and worst of great newspapers, I had no idea that I should find my whole fate altered at say about page forty-two. There I stumbled on a syndicated article emanating from Riga, where the best lies of the times are manufactured by rival propagandists, white and red. The article dealt with the first six months of Bolshevism in Central Asia, and as I read

Came a click

As when a trap shuts and you're inside the den.

In ten seconds I was on fire with what became the mock-epic of *Ulug Beg*. I was burned up by it for a year and a half, though the first lines didn't begin to shape themselves for some months, and came to me at an inconvenient moment, when I had to jot them down on the back of a Claremont Country Club bill for \$5.40, oddly enough receipted. My college work interfered sadly with progress, but I had got through a couple of cantos, before I wangled a sabbatical year, on the ground that I desired to write a poem about as long as *Paradise Lost*, though not so good. We spent that year in Peace Dale. It is not possible to be happier. I wrote every day between three and six hours till I could drive no more. Then I read like a tiger, Walpole, Spenser, Lecky, Voltaire, Fiske, Trevelyan, Hardy, Henry Fairfield Osborn, Melville, Wordsworth, William James, on the principle that man is omnivorous. One digests better if one takes what

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comes to hand. And the man who counts intellectual calories will find that the juices of the mind don't secrete very well. To top off there was squash-racquets before dinner every night. There is nothing better than to have an absorbing task and a furious recreation. When you come out of the court into the glimmering cold of a December night, it is a noble thing to feel the fervor of your own body. I hope I am properly grateful.

The book was finished by March. For better or worse it shaped my fate and it has got me more of what a man really desires than most of my other works. To have been more successful it should have been less discursive, and many passages should not have been put in at all. Yet I think there was thought in the work, whether intrinsic or incidental, of which I need not feel ashamed. Everything I had read or experienced went into it, and a lot I hadn't. But it was a shock to me to discover, when I had with malice aforethought purloined "jewels five words long," that illiterate friends and still more illiterate reviewers never suspected the intentional embezzlement. In fact they did not know there was anything to embezzle. The story about T. S. Eliot's admirer applies: "No other living poet," said the enthusiast, "could have written such a fine line as 'The army of unalterable Law'." "No other living poet," replied the adversary, "but George Meredith could and did." At this point my sympathy for Eliot, whose ironic quotation had been completely lost on his witless votary, is of solar intensity. If they did not observe the borrowed plumes, which I had supposed every housebroken human being would do, my critics were even more seriously in error on another point. They put me down for a mighty traveler, familiar with the Pamir and acquainted with Himalaya. English army officers have complimented me in good faith on the local color of an Orient I have visited only in the imagination. As anyone can see I drew heavily on Kipling, but I got even more from Arminius

Vambéry, James Morier, Burton, Holdich (who, I feel certain, is Colonel Creighton in *Kim*) and Perceval Landon. Nor was Browne's extraordinary *History of Persian Literature* wholly ignored. But all that background came out of books. Nor am I ashamed. Books are a part of life and experience, in spite of the intellectual's admiration for what he calls reality.

I stated above that the book won for me what a man really desires. It could hardly be said to have had a sale at all. But the people who liked it, liked it very much. Gamaliel Bradford reviewed it in the *Bookman* in such terms as very nearly to satisfy the author, though Alfred Knopf wrote me profanely that if Our Lord himself were to review any work whatever in the *Bookman* it wouldn't sell six extra copies. (Which is true.) Delightful men sought me out. There are few greater pleasures than to make friends for such a reason. I made them. A curious footnote may be added. The book was published under a pseudonym, because I desired to dedicate it to Kipling and did not wish to press into his company under my own name. The work I considered was a sort of declaration of independence as against the overwhelming influence he had exercised over my generation, and he himself appeared in it as a minor character. He actually wrote me a note of acknowledgment. And it was not his custom often to acknowledge. I doubt if he even ran his fingers through the first few pages. But he did say that the dedication, in which I expressed complete disagreement with his politics, was interesting. Doubtless it was no more than common politeness. But common politeness was not necessarily the governing principle of his private life. Also with all his imperfections on his head, if that man had said one line of mine was "interesting," I should not have thought the less of that line.

It is perhaps appropriate in this connection to say something of Mr. Gamaliel Bradford whose review of *Ulug Beg*

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gave me unusual pleasure. He was a remarkable product of the Boston which had created phalanxes of George Apleys, and in my sight a singular, sympathetic, and tragic figure. Mr. Bradford was a lifelong invalid, who seldom was able to work more than two hours at a stretch, and a recluse by bitter necessity. His published work was remarkably successful with the public. But I am of the opinion that much of what still remains unpublished, his journal and his poetry, will be the basis of his fame. I speak with some knowledge, having myself read his two thousand poems. The verse is often pedestrian. But there is a fire and bitterness not found in his elaborate and always competent essays. The passion of literature ate him up. No man of the times was more learned. And it curdled the blood when he made a point by quoting entire stanzas from untraveled cantos of the *Faerie Queen*. The little, worn-looking man, in perpetual danger of savage pain, had managed to read every great author in five languages, yet had a healthy hatred of pedantry. From his sickroom he considered with a prisoner's yearning a world with which it was impossible for him to mingle, and his letters and poems are full of his deprivation. Yet he was not sour. He sought such contact with people as was permitted to him. And his kindness to younger writers was of the sort that is only found in great natures. Most men, subjected to a tithe of what he had to endure, would have hated everyone and collapsed into detestable invalidism. But he managed to be attractive and incredibly energetic at the same time. He had transcended the Puritan, yet kept his virtues. It is a good thing to like Tasso or Ovid, yet to retain something of Marston Moor. Ignoramuses made fun of him. They generally do, when any excellence appears that will not take up their marching-step. But I had the good fortune to admire that independent and direct mind.

I returned to the university at the end of the summer of 1922 to begin my last year of teaching. A change had been

made possible, and I had determined to resign my academic footstool in the spring of 1923. The year went pleasantly enough, and the prospect of liberty was almost intoxicating. The university was kind to its not too profitable servant. And I take some natural pride in the fact that pressure was put upon me to reconsider my decision. But I knew better. Unless a man has a fundamental passion for teaching, he really has no business on a faculty. And if that be so, I had been on the rolls thirteen years too long. Nevertheless, when I delivered my last lecture, I had a queer pang, complicated by an almost savage joy that I should never again tell bright young people what they ought to find out for themselves without the intervention of a minor priest of literature.

There was a dinner of the department for Professor Gayley who became Emeritus that year. And on that occasion I found how pleasant it was to have liked so many agreeable colleagues and to have it apparently reciprocated. Whatever feuds or differences there may have been in the past had sunk into oblivion. And I left with an excellent taste in my mouth. I do not know how much I taught my pupils, but I learned a good deal myself, even if it were not sufficient for my purposes.

INTERIM AND CRISIS

ANY violent change in the routine of existence is bound to have reactions. I was no exception when I regained my freedom with a sigh. The daily contact with exciting men, which I had come to take for granted, ceased with the daily grind. Nor did I at once get started on what I wanted to do in spite of unlimited leisure. The most trying time for a writer is the period when an idea is in solution, before it shapes itself. In reality he is working, but he feels and looks idle. Until the signal comes, he backs and fills like a yacht jockeying, and this in some measure overtook me. I idled a little in San Francisco, where fortunately for me I had pleasant friends. And it would be hard for me to be too grateful to that delightful group of men at the University Club who were called the "Old Guard."

They were not just a bunch of congenial cronies, held together by long habit. Their union was the result of real struggles and anxieties in a country which was new when they came to it. The crises of politics and business had tested their friendship with every sort of acid. And now they sat back to enjoy it. They were anywhere from twenty to forty years older than I. But I never have enjoyed contemporary friends more than that group. The annual dinners

of Warren Olney or Philip Van Loben Sels were something. The exquisite food and wine were surpassed by the exquisite ease and the exquisite manners. And there was some curious open-mindedness about them, that one is not apt to associate with elderly men. If you believed something which they did not, they did not tell you not to be a young fool. If something new turned up in science or literature or art, they wanted to know all about it. Warren Olney, their type and chief, was as fine a creature as I have known. He was a great lawyer, retired from practice, but he knew as much about Renaissance thought, particularly Erasmus, as a man needs to know. There was a story about him which always struck me, He was mayor of Oakland when Theodore Roosevelt, then President, visited the Coast. It became his duty to preside at a public meeting where the President was to make an address. Any other mayor in America would have shot his mouth in a big way. But Warren Olney merely said: "Ladies and Gentlemen, I have the honor to introduce the President of the United States," and sat down. That brevity and dignity have not recently been imitated.

I had seen a good deal of that delightful crowd for the last three years before I resigned and they were a great resource to me after our removal to Carmel, one of the loveliest and least satisfactory villages in America, whither we departed in the late summer of 1923. By a pleasant fatality I have always lived in beautiful places. And of these Carmel for splendor of surroundings is one of the most startling. Point Lobos, with its cliffs one mass of rock plants, the flaming marine gardens that glow at their feet, and the gigantic seas roaring in the glorious clefts, is beyond dream or description. And the whole of that Coast, the great mad cedars, sequoia, and pine, beach and crag, mountain and sea, intoxicates the mind, though I confess that to me it has always appeared in a happier aspect than to Robinson Jeffers. No doubt my view is the shallower.

But it is a mistake to live in a place where more than two or three are gathered together in the name of art or literature. O God! it was mediocre with its artistic-literary small talk, and the philosophy diluted from the thin intellectual bouillon of the *Nation* and the *New Republic*. You couldn't swing a cat under the pine-trees without knocking down a poetess, and it might have been a very good idea. There were of course fine people there, like Jimmy Hopper and Spohr the biologist, who worked hard and didn't ask you if you had seen their latest in *Scribner's*. And there were others, for instance, Burton Williams, an heroic cripple with a mind as direct as his body was distorted. But most of the mediocre life of the place was dominated by old maids of both sexes, who made considerable claims on the ground that they had once opened a volume of *The Golden Bough* or skimmed part of an essay by Havelock Ellis. This is tiresome to me, for when I say I have read a book, I mean I have read every word. I may not have understood it, but I have given it all the consideration of which I am capable. I cannot bear people who talk your ear off about "the Greeks," and get Socrates mixed up with Sophocles. Carmel had more than its fair share of that brand of intellectual.

This infuriates me still in recollection, but it would not account for the melancholia—I mean melancholia—which descended upon me like a cloud in the lovely autumn of 1923. I was perfectly married, I had three lovely children, I had enough money for our modest necessities. *Ulug Beg* was out. A new book had been accepted, another was under way. And yet two-thirds of my energy was being eaten up in ridiculous agonies which make me smile at their absurdity now and shudder at the recollection of the power they had then. I knew they were absurd. But there they were. I tried psychiatrists, exercise, alcohol. If I had only thought of opium! More than a year that strange fog was upon me. And

the bravest thing I have ever done in my life was to keep working while the fox gnawed.

The essence of such trouble is that one is ashamed of it, as Russian peasants are ashamed of a tumor. The mere fact that the anguish is absurd prevents one from speaking of it, and the thing thrives on secrecy. If one could speak, the aeration of the poisoned well would purify it. But you wouldn't be ill if you could do that. And the effort is beyond most courage. To the sufferer the more he suffers, the more it becomes impossible to vomit up the corrosion of his entrails. Presently an emetic is indicated.

Friends may do you good or evil. I was fortunate. If there was a thing in the world for which I had a bitter contempt in the spring of 1924, it was psycho-analysis, every aspect of it, and all three of its schools. I had made fun of it privately and in print. I had said that in thirty years Freud would be remembered "like Charcot today." The more depressed I became the more intransigent I grew with respect to all that rigmarole, which I freely compared with phrenology and homeopathy. To me it was witch-doctoring, and the mere suggestion of relief to imbeciles more than normally suggestible. But I had dear friends who did not think so, and had seen that sort of hostility before. I never have quite understood how they managed it, though part of it was a sort of pious fraud. At any rate early in 1925 I had been partly persuaded and partly tricked into committing myself into the hands of Dr. Jung.

By the time this conversion had been achieved I had got out a second book, *Ph. Ds*, and was dreaming of a third which did not get into print for nine years. It was again a study in the Bernesque-Byronic and its hero was to be the greatest scoundrel of the times, d'Annunzio. Accordingly I went abroad to get as much information as I could about my quarry, and to discover if possible at "the House of the

Interpreter" why I had plunged in such a slough of despond. Late in March, 1925, I went forlornly overseas.

I hadn't been in Europe since 1911. And this Europe in no respect resembled anything I had ever known. I summed it up later by saying what was true in 1925, that the war had brought it to pass that the Germans were polite, the French were rude, the Italians didn't beg, and the English spoke to you. The Germans have since reverted to their natural discourtesy. I went swiftly to Rome, where I spent April in a desperate struggle with the Italian tongue. I was as lonely as a man can be, and I could only stammer the beautiful language in which it seemed to me I made but disappointing progress. Nevertheless I read the *Divine Comedy* right through and was pleased to note that I turned less and less to the English version on the opposite page. There are few greater experiences than that poem, even when read under my disadvantages. Not to have read it is like being a eunuch by your own choice. And I thank my Maker that however I staggered I knew the beauty and the pleasure.

Much of the time I wandered about the city with a young architectural student, on whom I practised my Italian, and who pointed out to me some of the aspects of his art. Rome is easily the least attractive world-city, unless you look well beneath the surface, and it is increasingly so, as the savage crudities of fascist architecture impose themselves upon the decayed baroque, which, it must be admitted, in its high moments, has a sort of senile delicacy and grace. Baroque at its best makes me think of an elderly lady who has kept her figure, at its worst of an elderly lady who has not. The ancient fountains are lovely and the Forum, unless they plant the Ministry of Telegraphs in it, which they are very apt to do, will remain the place in Europe most exciting to the mind. Yet in spite of that, Rome is a hateful town, provincial in spirit, and fully qualified to be the capital of the sort of empire whose center it is. In what other great city

would a dramatic critic, reviewing a new play, point out, as an evidence of civilization, that there were quite a number of "smokings" in the first-night audience? That was in cold print in *Tevere* or *Il Popolo* the morning after Buontempelli's charming *Nostra Dea*.

An Italian youth who sat beside me at that performance, in which Marta Abba covered herself with really divine glory, confided to me that he was a student of the stage and particularly admired the great, native American drama—he could not at first recollect the title—*Peg O' My Heart*. During an interminable intermission longer than any act, my connoisseur and I wandered in to the lobby. There we beheld the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance. It could perfectly well have been Don Quixote, but I suspected that it was in reality Guglielmo Ferrero, and asked my chance acquaintance if it were not he. The young fellow had never heard of him, though Ferrero had been world-famous for at least twenty years. During the next act, something caused me to turn around. I looked full into the eyes of the real Italy less than a yard away, the Italy that does not come to Rome if it can help it. The eyes were the eyes of Pirandello, kind and piercing. If I had known that man, I might have forgotten the big, graceless, meretricious town.

Whether I am a perpetual adolescent or no, the fact is that I like zoos, and Rome has a fine one. I discovered it one day in a fit of absent-mindedness and told a nice English old maid at the *pension* about it, when she admitted a similar weakness. Thereupon she admitted one I do not share. Why British old maids should at any time have been the infatuated admirers of Benito Mussolini I do not know. But the fact remains that he was at the time an object of their admiration and sympathy, even if one elderly island vestal did succeed in shooting him through the nose. My acquaintance asked me if I knew how to catch a glimpse of the Dictator. I hadn't the least idea. The next evening at dinner the lady

spoke to me. Her eyes were shining like those of a Virgin of the Annunciation. "I went to the zoo," she said, registering eternal gratitude, "and I saw Him—in a cage, petting a tigress." In my opinion that tigress didn't know the meaning of the word opportunity.

I cannot think my feeling about Rome was due entirely to depression of spirit. I had much pleasure there. I knew nice people. Walter Lowrie, the pastor of the American Church, was a wit if there ever was one, and the only clergyman during one of whose sermons I have heard a ripple of pleasure run through the congregation. I don't mean a titter. They were properly pleased by whatever it was he said. Harry Miller turned up from San Francisco, literally emerging from the tomb of Romulus, like an unexpected kitten from a conjuror's hat. The picnic at Ostia in a forsaken garden with Harry and his wife would take an evil taste out of anyone's mouth. A flagon of wine on an antique marble table in sight of the fascinating ruins, the mild Mediterranean wind, the sense of well-being it induced, that was all very nice indeed. But pleasant people and pleasant events have never destroyed for me the notion that Rome as it is is just about what fascist Italy deserves. And until Italy is fascist no more, in my sight there will always be something cramped, frightened, hushed, and repellent about the Eternal City.

At the end of April a telegram came for me. And I knew it was time to meet the unknown, or better the unconscious, at Zürich. A day later I was once more in Switzerland, an invalid whose trouble was quite as much of the imagination as ever his tuberculosis had been.

ZÜRICH

ZÜRICH is in general much hated by American travelers. The bourgeois appearance of the place, the smug prosperity of the Bahnhofstrasse, the uninspired modern architecture, the rather dull ancient buildings, have to be got over. The outskirts of the city, park slipping into legitimate wild woods, the lake, and the splendid rampart of the Glärneralp, make up for these matters. Nor do I know a city in Europe where more is doing in the mind. Practically every human being I met there was intelligent down to the very tram-drivers, one of whom seeing *La Vita Nuova* under my arm favored me with some succinct and illuminating remarks on Dante, to whom he was clearly devoted. Under no dictatorship will you find such a bookshop as Herr Ebell's. It may be that I exaggerate the force of living and unpretentious intellect which I felt in the place, for I had an awakening there myself. But to this day I feel grateful to the little city, as if the very buildings were responsible for benefits that were conferred upon me. The best hotel in the world might have something to do with it too.

Dr. Jung himself was away at the moment of my arrival, but the lady, his principal assistant, who was to investigate me and my insolubilities, received me at once in her pleas-

ant house on the Freiestrasse. And the strange business began immediately.

Since nothing on earth could be more boring than such a case-history, I am not going into the details. It would be as dull as a stream of consciousness novel, and not unlike one. And I do not propose to inflict anything like that on a reader who might be capable of even more damaging comparisons. But a few casual comments may properly be made.

In the first place, I don't think there is any relief in the world comparable to the first expectoration of your griefs. In my case it was so immediate that I was actually able to grin feebly when Miss W— after reviewing my collection of inner horrors said with pardonable irony: "All this seems pretty infantile." For ten days thereafter I was in a sort of heaven. The fog of melancholy seemed to have blown away. To illustrate that fallacious euphoria would be beyond powers superior to mine. But the world shone in my sight. The wet grass of the tiny golf course by the hotel glowed with strange internal light. The crests of the Glärneralp, when rifts came in the cloud, were a revelation special to me. And the bursting spikes of the horsechestnuts, or the placeless cry of the bird who utters the word of fear, were part of a new world that I saw, felt, and heard with quickened and novel senses.

I did not know that, in the slang of the science, I was "up." You cannot know that until you have been "down." But it was magnificent while it lasted. Too soon the whole edifice of hope tumbled about my ears, and I descended into a depression as black as hell, and as unreal as the exultation had been. To the uninitiated this must sound perfectly absurd and furthermore a complete confirmation of the prejudices which it is natural for the uninitiated to form. I don't blame the uninitiated. I had every one of those prejudices once myself. And I am convinced that only by endur-

ing that strange rhythm of "up" and "down" can one arrive if at all at the suitable orientation.

Nevertheless merely towering like an eagle or plunging like a stone won't do the business. Jung, that most delightful combination of an Olympic athlete, Plato the broad-browed, refined scientist, and dirt-farmer, has for a long time been a firm believer in the diagnostic and prognostic value of unconscious drawing. The victim dwelling among untraveled ways, so to say, records his own history and progress. When a thing has been discovered, something may possibly be done about it. To the so-called practical man this will seem foolishness. But, as Whitehead remarked in a different connection: "The practical man is mistaken as he always is, when he neglects his natural function, the mastication of food which other people have prepared." Try as I would, I could not draw. And the sketches of what I saw in dream or daydream were no good to me. Accordingly I took my own line and attacked the problem in verse. And my brief book *Animula Vagula* is the record of my *Saison en Enfer*. Almost every day the verses came, and, good or bad, they were different from anything that had come to me before. I could, I suppose, write a page of exegesis on every one of the four hundred lines. Nor do I think that such a comment would be without human interest. Nevertheless let no reader be alarmed. If any book of mine impressed people this did. They knew, whatever the nature of the experience, that it was a genuine one, which made further definition unnecessary, and they were correspondingly kind. Even the reviewers were practically unanimous. I do not remember a dissenting voice. And I was particularly touched by the notice of an undergraduate at Princeton, who went all out on it, with the delightful sympathy of twenty-one. Also I have reason to believe that it still holds attention, for though published twelve years ago and long out of print, it costs like blue blazes in the second-hand market.

While *Animula Vagula* grew under my hand, I passed along the foreordained sine curve of analysis, "now dancing merry, now like to dee." Matters of moment from my unknown darkness came to light and even had their pendants and correspondencies in what, with unconscious humor, is called the real world. Into these it is not necessary to go. They are my business and I will not be one of those writers who spit out their mystery, as if it were necessarily important. Gray's remark that anyone might write an interesting book if he would set down everything, has caused a lot of trouble for it has become a fourfold shield for egotism with a T. The reflection of a stream of consciousness is only interesting, if there are fish in the stream, preferably trout. And barring genius, the dead cats which in general float down such currents are no more attractive in a book than they are in a drain.

If I were asked what definite good a painful and frequently highly disagreeable process did me, I should reply as follows. In the first place it revealed to me what not everyone knows, that thought and intuition are not the same thing, and that I was in the habit of substituting the second for the first. Other people frequently make the contrary error. Whichever mistake one habitually makes, that way madness lies. In the second place my analysis destroyed the materialistic theatrical scenery of my mind. Almost everyone in my generation lived on a stage where it was tacitly assumed that everything not only could be but would be explained on a centimeter-gram-second basis. It may be so, but remains to be proved. Meanwhile it is dangerous and disingenuous to take it for granted. In the third place, when that pure assumption tottered and fell, I quite suddenly found myself looking at matters that because of it had lost their vitality for me, with excited eyes and heat in my brain. It was like being a Renaissance Man with a new-found Greek manuscript. Better yet it was like being a

Twentieth-Century Man who had escaped into the novelty of things. Fable and myth resumed their beauty. No longer steel-engraving allegories, they become living symbols of what man had not yet expressed. Ideas that had been static, like moths in a museum showcase, fluttered in their own tropic glen of fantasy. Nor can I make clear how happy this made me. The taste and the tang came back. There is a lot of difference between reading about Endymion in Bullfinch and reading about him in Keats.

The skeptic, of course, will say that what happened to me would have happened to me as a result of any exciting alteration of environment and any impact of powerful personalities on an uncritical nature. I cannot accept that verdict. The effect was too radical to be so easily explained. I had known many environments and had felt strong personal impacts before. The new system opened the world again, and unloosed such powers as I had. I do not cease to be grateful. And no amount of skepticism is capable of shaking that conviction.

In behalf of the skeptic, however, these things ought to be said. At first blush no subject looks more louche and suspect than analysis. The cryptic jargon, which I personally detest, and much of which is unnecessary, the furious dissensions of the schools, the mysticism (only apparent) so offensive to the illogical, all these things make one see readily the point of view of the materialistic psychologists, who stick to wandering mazes in which unhappy rats can find no way. Analytical psychology, like other branches of medicine, is as yet more an art than a science. Nevertheless I think the general drift of it is now pretty clear. The existence of the unconscious and some of the laws that govern it are I think as much demonstrated as they need to be. But the skeptic has a talking-point, if he considers the incredible quantity of conversational tosh that surrounds the subject. The whole business fascinates the defeated and the unsuccessful, who

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seem to think that a good analyst can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Whereas every good analyst knows that no third-rate painter ever became a Rembrandt by getting over his mother-fixation. The painter might, however, learn to paint with less affectation, and better yet steel himself to become a bank clerk. When everything has been admitted, it seems to me still apparent that there is a new, important, and interesting thing under the sun.

One word, however, not to the skeptic, but to the believer. Analysis is incredibly painful. It is quite true, as the wise say, that it is laboratory work and the real trouble comes afterward. But in this form of vivisection, no anesthetics can be employed. And a scalpel in the surgery can hurt just as much as a dagger in the street. No one in his senses ought to undertake analysis, unless what he is undergoing is worse. Lots of maladjustments are no more than a sensitivity to poison-ivy. To spend six months in a mud-bath, because of a mild rash, would be altogether out of proportion, particularly if the mud is mixed with hell-fire. I do not see how I could have escaped it. Anyhow I didn't. I got rid of a morbid growth, but how much better never to have had the growth in the first place!

Life under such circumstances was bound to produce singularities and certainly did in my case. I grew quarrelsome and bitter to the extent that it still seems odd to me that I never excited the unfavorable notice of the Swiss police. Everyone about me was in the same condition. And everyone was insanely confidential or insanely reticent. One burst with prejudice for or against other people. And no thin ray of common sense or humor penetrated our dark spirits. One lady of my acquaintance hated a man so, whom she barely knew, that she used to kick his hat around the floor when she found it hanging in her analyst's ante-room. She'd have done it to his head, if she had dared. Incidentally she is as nice a person as one could hope to know. If one of

the unhappy trusted you, such a story as would stagger Leopold Bloom would come from cultivated lips. And awfully queer things happened in public. I can't explain this but it took place. I myself in presence of six witnesses read what was in another's mind as glibly as any charlatan that does it for his living. I couldn't do it before. I couldn't do it again. But if thought was ever transferred it was then. Also it was an absolutely shocking moment for everyone concerned, though the items I produced were wholly innocent.

Whether because anyone is exciting under a strain or for other reasons, most of the people in Jung's seminar interested me enormously. I could write a book about one lady whose critical mind and gentle heart pulled me through dozens of ebony-black hours. But I feel certain she wouldn't care about it. There were, however, among the faithful in my time two men who have since died who seem to me worth describing a little.

Oscar A. H. Schmitz was a very well-known Austrian author, a thoroughly nice man, and I am happy to say my friend. He was half-Jew and horribly neurotic about it, as he well might be, if, with the morbid intuition of the psychologically disturbed, he foresaw the hateful developments of the next ten years. He was much older than I and had known Wilde and the Yellow Book clique in the early nineties. And his book *The Land Without Music* is a pretty good picture of the last kick of the Victorians. Schmitz had an odd peculiarity. He spoke English astonishingly well, but read it with difficulty. He and I were very sympathetic, and it was he who first revealed to me the poems of Christian Morgenstern, a writer as nearly in the category of Lear and Lewis Carroll as it once was possible for a German to be. It is utterly impossible now. We had great fun together in our occasional lucid intervals, which happily coincided a number of times. But he inadvertently taught me something in this fashion. He had invited me to tea with him in the gar-

dens of the Baur-au-lac, a pleasant place on the lake front. I have always had a passion for birds, and when a peculiarly exquisite male chaffinch began picking up the crumbs which fell from the table, I was pleased by the creature's beauty and confidence, and pointed it out to Schmitz, who, I suppose, must have been rather short-sighted. If I had indicated the presence of a mastodon, he could hardly have appeared more astonished. His eyes popped from his head. "Never," he said, "have I seen one before." As the chaffinch is one of the commonest of Swiss birds and will come right into the house, unless you keep the door shut, this seemed improbable, but I only said something polite about birds in general and expected no sequel.

Nevertheless a year or two later what still seems to me an odd one came. Schmitz had published his memoirs. And a friend told me I had better get hold of *Ergo Sum*, because I would find myself in an odd rôle. I don't read German easily any more, but I looked up the passage, and I still think it as astonishing a bit of transmogrification as I ever stumbled on. That solitary chaffinch had undone his reason and inflamed his imagination. Paraphrased, his version of the tiny episode was like this. He had encountered in 1925 an American poet in Zürich at Jung's seminar, who had talked of his fondness for birds. (So far so good. I had even told him of a mild superstition of mine that they bring me luck.) He had invited this exotic individual to tea with him. No sooner had they sat down in the hotel garden than birds of every kind (aller art) surrounded the American who delivered himself of some very deep wisdom indeed. Encouraged, the birds now sat upon the head and shoulders of the stranger, who at this point bore a startling resemblance to the mystical figure of a primitive man (Urmensch) in one of Schmitz's own visions. After reading that passage I had a mild sense of understanding what it must be like to be a glamour-girl. But it was an awful lot to get out of one

chaffinch picking up crumbs. That cock-eyed account of what never happened has made me ponder on the validity of personal impressions in other autobiographies. It may be I misread him as he misread me, that the fantasy that paced with reality eventually usurped the throne of fact.

Schmitz was a famous man in his time and region, but George Beckwith's name was writ on water. Cary de Angulo introduced me to him at one of Jung's seminars, and for once in my life I hated at first sight. My normal course is to like 'em first and hate 'em afterwards. This time it was reversed. As we shook hands, his patrician beak was in the air and he looked down it at me in such a manner that it would have been fun to kill him on whatever side of whatever barricade. He glanced at me venomously from time to time during the lecture and the subsequent not too brilliant discussion. At the first opportunity I fled so as to escape any further contact with the hateful creature. I had got thirty yards into the Froebelstrasse, when a voice called my name. I turned automatically and Beckwith came hot-foot up. This is what he said: "I looked at your clothes and thought I had never seen anything so awful. I heard you laugh and thought I had never heard a more ghastly sound. Then I saw you had a beautiful mouth and decided to give you another chance." There might be two schools of thought on all three points, but I laughed at him till passers-by turned around and the tears came to my eyes. He absolutely looked embarrassed, but finally I was able to suggest some beer. A more delightful lunatic never walked a planet not distinguished for sanity. A more unhappy man never stepped habitually too hard on the gas, nor on the whole a more strictly honorable one. Into his intimate history I shall not go, but there was nothing to be ashamed of in it and a great deal to pity. He was I think the only man I ever knew who said whatever came into his head with complete effrontery and perfect impunity. The last phrase isn't quite true, because a famous

lady once slugged him with a vanity-case in a Paris bus. And if he said what he said he said, he had it coming to him. He was quite troubled by the episode, seeming not to realize that if private idiosyncrasy is to be revealed at all, the person concerned is apt to reserve the privilege of naming the time and the place. But George's talk was a revelation of himself and like as not of you, and it was worth going far to hear.

George had the Pucklike trick of turning up from behind a tree somewhere. For years he never appeared except unexpectedly. And I think he regarded a mildly dramatic entrance as a score for him. He had what amounted to a queer curse on him. He was immensely attractive to women, but there was a time-limit on it—to be exact ten days. Every woman, meeting him for the first time, would tell you how fascinating he was and ten days later give you to understand that he was Judas Iscariot or a king cobra on her front lawn. Never to my knowledge did he do anything to deserve these distinctions. But the queer characteristic was the origin of as queer a story as I have heard, though Beckwith I think had never noted the quality, and merely regarded himself as a naturally unhappy creature, hopelessly ill adapted to this world, which was God's truth. He told me the story himself.

One of the English professional beauties (we will call her Lady Diana Sealyham) came to Paris, which Beckwith then occupied in great force. What was practically a *grande passion* was immediately in full flower. Ten days later, true to his fate, such a quarrel arose between them as most people only read about, and they parted at the high pitch of fury. Next day Lady Di, who must have been nicer than most professional beauties and couldn't imagine what the quarrel was about, telephoned him that she was sorry because of the bitterness between them, and wouldn't he take a walk in the Bois with her to talk things over. Beckwith had one of those loathsome Italian dogs that have been compared to worn-out blacking-brushes, and he took the beast to meet the

beauty. In a few minutes the peace-conference was in the usual state of peace-conferences. And the dog had disappeared. With less than his customary chivalry and still less reason, he blamed Lady Di for his loss. And after a splendid burst of bitter recrimination they parted. Beckwith, much grieved by the loss of his thoroughly offensive pet, spent hundreds of francs on advertising but without result. Then one evening he got tight with a chance acquaintance, and in his cups lamented his bereavement. The other bade him be of good cheer, for he knew a witch on the Left Bank who could find anything. Together they sought out the enchantress and explained the case. The witch told Beckwith to boil one of his shirts, with three onions and, when the garment turned pink, to remove it from the fire, which would compel the guilty to return the lost dog. I don't know whether or no a shirt boiled with three onions will turn pink. But George said he performed the incantation on the gas-stove in his thoroughly modernistic apartment. The whole thing is a travesty of Huysmans.

Next day Lady Di, oblivious that the Prince of the Powers of the Air had been invoked against her, went for a walk with a young woman her friend, who knew neither Beckwith nor his dog. They passed a coal-yard from which emerged a truck. On the seat beside the driver sat the hateful Italian hound. Indignation still rankled in Lady Di's breast, and she said to herself: "Though it were ten thousand times George Beckwith's dog, it may stay on that truck till Doomsday for all of me." She and her friend walked on. A few minutes later Lady Di's conscience smote her. She turned back to the coal-yard, and for three hours she and the long-suffering friend waited until the truck returned. Lady Di claimed the dog. The truck-driver was sure the Lady was mistaken. He had had the dog always. Something like a scene began and a policeman approached to investigate. At that point the dog played up, fawning in an ecstasy

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of affection on Lady Di's friend, whom he had never before seen in his wretched life. The policeman handed down a judgment of Solomon, called the truck-driver a *mauvais sujet*, and delivered the disgusting creature to the two girls. Lady Di, as the witch had predicted, returned the dog to Beckwith.

This would have conquered me, but not George. He remained angry and he reasoned that if the witch could do so well she could do better. Accordingly he sought her out and told her that, though he wished no permanent injury to Lady Di, he thought a pimple on the beauty's cheek, to last say a fortnight, would do him and her a world of good. "As easy as eating," said the witch and gave him an appropriate charm. Three days later it worked. A magnificent boil formed—on the end of his own nose, the first he had ever suffered from.

The bothersome point about the story is this. If it be false, which it clearly must be, how and why did he make it up?

But I was very sorry when someone told me that another speeding car had come to grief outside of Los Angeles.

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I FLEW from Zürich to London. Not since the war had I been up, and the great Handley-Page made me feel as if I were flying in a cathedral, though it was a pygmy beside contemporary monsters. With my usual luck I had beautiful weather over the channel. The coast of England was clear all the way to Plymouth. There is no nobler sight than the narrow seas from five thousand feet up; and I got the full benefit, for the pilot, contrary to Imperial Airways regulations, invited me to sit beside him. It gratified me somehow more than more important things have done.

London was just what I needed after Zürich. For in Zürich madness had been carried to the point of sanity. And in London sanity is clearly carried to the point of madness. For all its stodginess I love the place, and never fail to be amused there. The galleries are glorious, and the theaters are generally so unreasonably bad that one doesn't have to go to them, always a great point with me. But if London were sacked and every painting and statue carried off to Berlin or Tokio it would still be a place of ineffable charm on account of people in it, whose like will not be found in Berlin or Tokio for a thousand years and who make you forget an architecture that would disgrace Rochester, N. Y. I don't

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mean just the wise and great, though they swarm. But the place is lousy with the cultivated and well bred. How they endure the grossness of their surroundings I cannot understand, any more than I can understand how they can talk on the superiority of their civilization to ours under their Bovril signs. In common with everyone else who ever observed them, I believe their pathetic incapacity to admit the existence of any viewpoint other than their own is a great part of their charm. Naiveté when it causes no inconvenience is apt to be fascinating, and though the word is well known to be French, the thing is unquestionably an English invention. Americans are frequently ignorant, but seldom naïf in the grand British manner. It is beyond our powers to assume that there is only one possible way of looking at anything. But they cannot speak without affording examples. Thus I have heard a man of the very first literary distinction inveigh against the indecency of a boy of fifteen who wore white knickerbockers instead of white slacks when he played at Wimbledon. Happily the child beat a number of persons who objected to his costume. But only the exceptional Englishman escapes from the heritage of Podsnap, and generally only in exalted moments. The proper thing to do is to recognize the limitation and derive as much discreet mirth from it as possible. Then all will be well.

Anyhow it was with me then and afterwards. No one has enjoyed himself more anywhere, for choice Withyham in Sussex. *Mutatis mutandis*, the region is so like my own South County "for mild air, pleasant speech, oak, beech, and slowness," that I forgive the splendor of the guelder-rose which they have and we have not. But then we have laurel. At a cottage close by Buckhurst I stepped right into Jane Austen and have no occasion to regret it. Graceful talk and kind manners are noble things. Anyone who cares may find at the end of *Guinea Fowl* a group of sonnets that to-

gether express reasonably well what I felt and feel about the England daily insulted in our press.

My mother and I toured England together while my father departed to the Troad where he expected to find evidence in support of some notions he had about Homer. I am glad for reasons which will appear that he realized that ambition and had his fun. We drifted through southern England and the borders of Wales in a car from Harrod's, that was driven by a chauffeur who looked like a Trollope archdeacon. Gaine was his name. And he had beautiful manners and not the faintest appearance of having led a life of paralyzing adventure for a large part of sixty-four years. It was at some Red Lion or White Horse that I came down one morning to consult about the day's journey. I found him conversing with a nondescript gypsy—in Spanish. Naturally I inquired where he had mastered that tongue. "Peru, Sir. 1879, in theîr navy, Sir." "There was a ship," said I, "the *Huascar*." "Served in her, Sir, in the battle, Sir." It seemed a bit thick. He had been in the most spectacular sea-fight of these times, with the iron-clads only fifty yards apart and a god-awful coup de grâce by boarding. He had been a commissioned officer in the Royal Navy during the war. And he was chauffeuring Americans for Harrod's. Two years later I tried to get him again. The oily-haired cockney clerk told me that they had fired him "for insolence to an American party." What the particular Americans were like, to whom Gaine was insolent, I will not try to imagine. But my blood boils when I think of a department store discharging a man who had been in one and a half Thermopylæes because of the injured dignity of a profiteer from South Bend.

That was a wonderful voyage. We had sweet weather. It is good to look down from a hanging wood at "the twisted pink chimneys of Compton-Winyeats." But never again will I enter such a house under such circumstances. No doubt

the proprietors need the money. But the sense that they are fleeing helplessly from room to room as the invaders advance, is too unpleasant. At Gloucester we saw the Bellows' once more after twenty-six years; John Bellows was dead. But his wife and his son William were as cordial as of old. It was then that a characteristic remark, in a tone of deepest sympathy, was uttered apropos of the death of the Orator of the Platte: "And so you've lost Mr. Bryan?" I wished Bryan no evil, but in his youth he had set the rich against the poor and in his age he stirred up the ignorant against the wise. I did not feel the loss as bitterly as England expected I might.

We drifted pleasantly from one cathedral town to the next, pausing here and there as it pleased us. Tintern with its arches of stone cobweb is the most delicately satisfactory ruin I know. And it is small wonder that having seen it, a giant should prove his greatness. One felt that even a dwarf might. In Oxford I saw the naked barbarity of which the English are capable. On the bulletin board of the Mitre Tavern appeared a notice of the British Canine Protective Association. It announced that on such a day, on such a street in the city, a garden fete would be held in the interests of the society, and that to make the gaiety complete a gentleman would recite poems—by Ella Wheeler Wilcox. I had not been aware that that particular Tenth Muse was one of the lost causes of which Oxford is said to be the home. One must take the good with the bad everywhere, but the English should be more careful than they always are, before they point the finger of amused scorn at provincial bad taste outside their island. Nor have they, I think, found out what to look for among us as well as we have found out what to look for among them. They do not know our wild rivers and naked mountains, only our night-clubs. Yet for all their peculiarities, what pleasanter land?

I grew anxious about my mother on that journey. She

seemed tired toward the end of it and complained of a numbness in one hand. The little doctor in London pooh-poohed it. But I was not convinced and was in that state of vague alarm which arises when you can't put your finger on anything definite and say: "This is what I don't like." A few days after we got home, she suffered a paralytic shock. She lived voiceless through four terrible weeks just long enough to see and recognize my father. The Turkish telegraph is a dreadful thing in time of trouble. It took us ten days to find him not more than a hundred and fifty miles away from a world-city. He died two months later literally of grief. Over them my sister and I set up a stone with these verses:

*Beauty, truth, and rarity,
Grace in all simplicity,
Here enclos'd, in cinders lie.*

I will say no more than that they were lovely in their lives and I loved them. Everything was changed. There was no one hereafter to whom to turn for advice, for assistance, for that older sympathy "that will pardon all things and believe a great many." That it happens to everyone does not make it less unique for the individual. It is as important as being born or dying and not unlike both.

Suddenly I lived with lawyers and grew horribly responsible to others about money and land. It is a hateful aspect of modern life that people, at a moment when they are least able to put up with it, are subjected to every refined nuisance that bureaucrats can think up. In our case the difficulties were merely routine, but I still feel a resentment, as I remember the rigmarole of affidavits and papers. As a special grace-note dangerous illness developed in my family. And nine times I crossed from coast to coast that year. I spent far too much time alone in a house that was empty of what had made it beautiful. And I hardly saw the joke when the redcaps at Chicago grinned broadly, seeing me descend from

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or board the Overland yet once more. Yet somehow things got straightened out after six months of what is called business and I felt as if the new-balanced world on hinges hung.

In June of 1926 I delivered the Phi Beta Kappa poem at Harvard. This was something of a feather in my cap, and it went off well. I had my come-uppance within a few hours. The poem which I read at the luncheon of the society in lieu of a speech was apparently diverting only to me. And it had lost much of its original brightness even in my sight before I galloped to the last line. I learned something right there. It is painful to learn, but necessary to know, that you must never read the wrong poem. The account of the awful dinner in Boston when Mark Twain did not amuse the Brahmins is something that I read with shuddering sympathy.

In the autumn of 1926 we moved from California to Peace Dale and a new life began. The empty house came alive with children. And the South County of Rhode Island is good country. The Doric tang of the only slightly nasal English was pleasant to my ear. And there is nothing evil in walking in the same woods as a father, where you once walked as a child. *Animula Vagula* was out and I was pleased by the reactions of its little audience. *The Legend of Quincibald* was beginning to take a sort of shape. And the *Furioso*, though only a couple of cantos along, was definitely on the ways. Life was simple but intensely pleasant.

Also that year I did one of the very few things I have ever done which I should call wise in the expectation of being agreed with. I built for my wife and myself a studio apart from the house but only a few steps away, that was designed for writing, for painting, and for music. More happiness has come to us from that little building than I am able to describe. Only one thing that I should call definitely unpleasant has ever happened in that room, a violent quarrel between two men, with me as a sort of preserver of the

peace. And that would have been magnificently funny, if I had not been troubled by the origin of the dispute. The room gives me a thrill of pleasure every time I enter it, even if it is only to pay the bills. What it has given us in leisure, in seclusion, in opportunity is inestimable. Every family needs such a place and I bless the instinct that made me build it.

That was a good period. Life had novel aspects and new interests, yet it was agreeably regular. There was always writing, without which I should be lost indeed, but 1927 remains in my mind as the sort of year when there was a kind of ideal normality about existence, when things in their natural course had the good taste to occur in a manner to suit me. As a matter of fact, I did have a lot of anxiety, but for some reason those difficulties have grown dimmer than problems perhaps less serious and certainly further removed in time. It may be they loom less because of a European voyage which is the subject of the next chapter. The journey has several reasons to stand by itself. And it is slavish to bow down and worship even such a dangerous deity as Chronology.

Troubles not my own took me to Europe again in the Spring of 1928, but I am ingenious about handing myself a good time while other matters are pending. One of the incidental diversions I should not have chosen, unless pushed, but I am glad I saw the Grand National, in spite of sharing the views of a former Shah of Persia. He, it will be remembered, on a visit to England said something to the effect that Allah created one horse to run faster than another and why the excitement. The start was beautiful. A straight shaft of sunlight through a rift in stormy Constable clouds made the butterfly colors blaze against the soaked green. And I dare say the carnage at Becher's Brook, where seven horses came down on top of Easter Hero, had elements of pity and terror. Tipperary Tim winning when Billy Barton fell at the last

hedge was good theater. But that two hundred thousand people should come from the uttermost parts of the sea for such a purpose is not to be explained as far as I am concerned. One touch of irony in the affair concerned another oriental potentate. The Amir of Afghanistan, with his suite, walked past the grandstand, and was cheered to the echo by all England. Two years later I saw him with his beautiful wife and children in the dining-room of a hotel in Florence. He looked like a man of affairs recovering from too much business and had some reason, for he was deposed and in exile. No crowd of two hundred thousand English would ever cheer him again. I suppose he too is bored by the recollection of that Grand National.

There were other and better amusements in that brief flight. I have grown to detest the theater. I would rather read. But I will go to see the *Beggar's Opera*, to me the finest thing of its kind, any time, anywhere, without a whimper. I know nothing that combines so well the pretty, the exalted, the wildly humorous, and the delightfully animal. The beggar's vision of Polly and MacHeath is as much a dream of the race, in other words an authentic myth, as the legend of Cupid and Psyche. It is not on so high a level. But we need to know all levels. People who think of him at all are apt to think of Gay as a light and fanciful poet. Certainly none has trodden more delicately. But that alone would not account for the vitality of the piece, whose quips have for the most part lost all meaning for us. Anything that runs sixteen hundred nights, two hundred years after it was written, has got something more. And Gay's feet are on the ground of human realities like Shakespeare before him. Nor can one be too grateful for the untrammelled treatment of subjects, which, in spite of, or perhaps because of, our factitious outspokenness, are still under veils and the leaf of the fig. Gay, though the top of eighteenth-century elegance, had also the native decency of the good savage. Lady

Chatterly and Mrs. Bloom are sick and thwarted, and the men of Lawrence and Joyce are worse. But MacHeath,

"Ready to twitch the nymph's last garment off,"

was and is sound and satisfactory. He and Polly will be agreeable and significant figures to healthy minds till Doomsday, and, as the lady remarked, till rather late in the afternoon on that occasion.

It was on this trip that for an odd purpose I sought out a direct, and, if it were possible, a legitimate, descendant of Gay's Polly. The lady in question manages a famous hotel on Jermyn Street, and is known to gods and men as Rosa Lewis. There are very few persons whom I have encountered for a brief moment who have made such a hit with me. She breathes a kindness that asks no questions, and there was never a string to her charity. I sent up my card and was ushered into the presence by a fairy-tale dwarf. The great lady, as she herself expressed it, "was all in a muck of sweat," but she introduced me to a battered elderly woman whose name made me jump. With her Rosa left me a few moments while she changed. It made me feel queer, for the old creature was the sister of a great American lawyer, the aunt of a great cabinet minister, and the mother of a famous artist. Her husband had been the friend of Stephen Crane. But one did not need to be told that she now had only one friend in the world. That friend, however, would do pretty well. I succeeded in keeping off all the subjects that raced through my head, as I talked with that old lady. Presently Rosa returned and over a bottle of champagne gave me as sensible advice about the matter of my visit as could be desired. That settled, we went for a walk. The theater crowd in the Haymarket stared at her as if she were a maniac, because she had no wrap over her evening gown. And it pleased me to see that she had not the faintest sense of their existence. Never in her life had she done anything to propitiate the conven-

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tional mind, and no one's opinion meant anything to her. She may have been in her way quite different from Queen Victoria, but no one ever left a better taste in my mouth.

A few days later I was in Zürich with an even more various character. Dr. Jung has a camp up the lake, and there I spent several days with him. It was the first time I had seen him in his private capacity, as a friend rather than as his patient. And heaven-sent it was. The more I think of him the more he seems to me the most remarkable animal I have ever known at all well. The tremendous body, the more tremendous mind, the huge eater and drinker, the huge imaginer and thinker, might make you feel inferior and helpless. But he induces a current in you when you are with him so that you are at your best and gayest, because your powers feel quickened and enlivened. The atmosphere is better when he's around. His mirth is an earthquake, and scientific curiosity makes me yearn to witness his wrath—as a bystander. I have seen him distinctly miffed, when the palpable and concrete horror of his invective distressed two thoroughly sweet Swiss ladies, who visibly feared that my transatlantic innocence might be corrupted. To sail with him for long mornings on the lake, to eat the strange delicious dishes over which he had brooded like a wizard at his caldron, and to listen to him wholly at my ease, gave me that singular pleasure which can only be had from a great work of nature. Of course there was scarcely an idea in my head that I was aware of having concealed from him, and in a sense I knew nothing of him whatever. But that is a good relation when one's confidence is perfect in the man one has not feared to trust.

THE ROAD TO FLORENCE

IN THE spring of 1927 my wife and I sailed for Europe with several definite objects. I wished to finish up some loose ends with Jung. And a plan dating back twenty years was coming into being. In 1907 I had walked with my father down from Fiesole to Florence. It was a gorgeous evening and the lovely slopes were glowing with yellow light. In that hour I said to myself, "Sometime I shall live here." It was a silent promise, but unlike others I have made, I made it good.

A later motive helped to justify the earlier one. *The Furioso*, which was still only in small part on paper, needed far greater knowledge of Italian, of Italians, and of Italy than I possessed. In Florence it might be possible to reduce my ignorance under pleasant circumstances. Accordingly we intended to spy out the nakedness of the land.

That engaging creature Philip Guedalla was on the steamer. His conversation is on the whole as entertaining as the next man's, whether in company or *à deux*. We had a mild dispute about American films, which I heartily dislike as a rule. But I wasn't going to be put down, and my patriotic hackles rose. I made some fairly tart remark to the effect that vulgarity had been noticed in England. "Yes," he

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said, "forty centuries of vulgarity look down upon us." I like that for the old reason that it is so true.

I worked hard and pleasantly for a month in Zürich, and at the end of it we were picked up by friends and whirled over the Alps. The passes were barely open. And the mountains had some strange novelty about them, as if they had just been born, or were a happy thought of an ingenious creator, who had hit on it the night before. They gave out an absolute effluence of spring "that you could have put in a bottle." We stopped for the night in Milan after covering the twenty-six miles from Stresa to the city in twenty-five minutes. Never in my life have I been so glad to see "that mixture of a wedding-cake and a railway-station" which is Milan Cathedral. I blessed every buttress that we were alive to see it. Next day we passed through Bologna and over the beautiful pass, one of the loveliest drives in the world, to Florence. No one for some reason has ever written of the Futa Pass except Aldous Huxley. But if there is anything more magnificent than the Bad Lands of the Apennines where the wheat stops short at the edge of the poisoned clay, I don't know it. The huge Perugino-background vistas, the heights crowned by chapel or castle, the lowering Gibraltar of Pietramala, the contrast of desert and sown, make up the greatest sort of view, the sort where man is visible in nature, where his hand has automatically emphasized the gigantic and unalterable.

Florence is a city famous for many reasons, for architecture, for painting, for poetry, for music. But one distinction it possesses which I do not remember to have seen mentioned. It is the smallest of world-cities and has at once the advantages of an out-of-the-way town and a great capital. Although decisions affecting nations are no longer taken there, they were once. And the atmosphere of them is about the place to this day. It may not be a good thing for a city to live on its memories, but Florence's are very good

ones. Men and women of the utmost interest are continually in a town hardly half the size of Buffalo, almost as if something tremendous were about to happen. The nice part is that it never does. In the course of a season every musician worth hearing will be there, Casals with his 'cello or Fuchtwangler with his bâton. Painters, poets, statesmen go and come. Ambassadors and Kings' mistresses resume acquaintance. If you wish you may discover Lloyd George in a gallery or Winston Churchill sketching in a garden, though why you should wish I do not know. And Thomas Mann will be looked on askance by two or three Sitwells on the Torna-buoni. The famous and notorious rub shoulders at Doney's, and one never knows when a Turkish princess or a financial big shot may produce amusement or ennui.

We house-hunted diligently in the enchanting place and finally pitched on what would suit us, one of five villas on the estate of an Englishman halfway up the hill toward Fiesole. The houses were perched on the rim of an enormous hollow podere planted with vines and olives, that reached like a green hand into the bosom of the city. In the depth of that valley the landlord had built a swimming-pool and a tennis court for our friends the Fausts, who had a villa opposite. Their children and ours would have the playground of a dream. It was just an impossible situation. Our villa was a humble affair as such things go in Florence, but it always seemed as big as the Grand Terminal to me. It had been the mere outbuildings of the vast palace adjoining, and part of it was a deconsecrated thirteenth-century chapel. The big drawing-room had been the orangery. And all of it was delightful. The whole house made you think of the proverb about what a bride should wear.

*Something old and something new,
Something borrowed, something blue.*

The borrowed part was the plumbing. And for the last item,

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I fear our unhappy houseboys had subsequently many a dismal dance about the furnace blue. The bargain was struck on the condition of building a room or two on, but no one minds such trifles in Italy. Because of that we suddenly found that a dream was trespassing on reality.

At Paris there was a telegram from Henry Canby, the editor of the *Saturday Review*, who had been printing reviews and poems of mine at intervals for the last five years. He wanted me to pinch-hit for some American man of letters, who at the last minute could not come to a Conference of Scholars and Writers from both sides of the sea on the state—of the English language. People would confer on anything in the latter end of what has been called “the Oppression,” when the money came in so easily, that in eighteen months would be as if it never had been. It looked like a diverting party to me, and I accepted. Fun on the grand scale it turned out to be, though just what the results of our discussions were still remains hidden in mystery.

The affair made one think of a trackmeet with champions present for every sort of literary event, though the Americans were a relatively uniform lot. Every one of us was, or had been, a college professor. But the English were variety itself, Bernard Shaw, Sir Henry Newbolt, Sir Israel Gollancz, Sir John Squire, Professor Boas, Professor Dover Wilson, Sir John Rieth of the B. B. C., John Bailey, nicest of critics, with the Earl of Balfour to rule the whirlwind.

The debates, the rambling opinions, the set orations, had for their stage a room in the building of the Royal Society for Literature. And it is fair to remark that even the wise and great seemed to be suffering from a common disease, the malady of having nothing to say and a strong disposition to say it. Sir John Rieth, with the practical problem of broadcasting in his eye, was, I think, actually suffering from ideas, but he got nowhere in the sea of anecdote, reminiscence, and epigram. At one of the sessions I sat beside

the delightful Bailey over against the ancient majesty of Shaw, who was diverting himself from time to time by hurling monkey-wrenches into the machinery of chaos. Bailey, as one taking elaborate notes, wrote furiously on the scratch-pad provided for him by the Royal Society, as in fact we all did, like the jury in *Alice in Wonderland*. When we rose at the end of the session, it was impossible for me not to see what he had written, which he who ran might read. "In an ecstasy of boredom and a florid cursive hand" he had scrawled "George Bernard Shaw" fifty times on the coarse paper, and I am sure that any graphologist would have discovered quintessential rage in every quirk of his pencil. About the only thing we accomplished was a dinner at the Athenaeum and the promise of another the ensuing year—which last fell through. People don't have that kind of dinner when depressions develop.

Nevertheless, that dinner revealed the English at their pleasant best. Lord Balfour was in the chair and by his social-art magic converted a symposium into one of the best parties that ever was thrown. There was sinuous and snaky grace about him, as he pulled the shy or the silent into the conversation. The woman doesn't breathe who could do it so well. His compliments were the very best butter, perfectly clearly from ducal cows. I sat between Sir Henry Newbolt and Sir Israel Gollancz. Sir Henry's poetry I knew, as also Sir Israel's prefaces, but for the first part of the meal I was pretty well taken up with the poet. He proved to be "as pleasant as a palm-tree," and had a non-conformist's sympathy for America and Americans, such as is not always found among cultivated Englishmen. I had not known till he told me that the *Atlantic Monthly* was during its great days the favorite magazine of English families not in the Fold of Canterbury. One can see why. The errors of Rome never crept into those double columns, as they might into English reviews, which were exposed to High Church in-

fluence. Sir Henry and I had a high old time, but presently I knew I must pay some attention to the Shakespearean on my right. He was charming too, but his almost open curiosity as to why a man he had never heard of had been invited to the conference nettled me a little. He began with oblique questions, but presently came out with a blunt "Who are you?" I suppose I might have replied, like Tristram Shandy to the customs man: "Don't puzzle me." Instead between irritation and amusement, I answered: "A comic poet," which checked the attack, for one cannot ask what a comic poet is. Sir Israel changed the subject, and asked me if I had yet met Mr. Shaw and should I like to. I said I should. And at that point the party began to break up.

As we hovered in that uneasy state (why people take so long to say farewell is beyond me) I suddenly found myself unprotected and completely exposed to the charm of Lord Balfour. In spite of what my acquaintances habitually say, I am as shy as anybody and even more so with respect to that kind of man, having a kind of terror of all and sundry who can speak well on their hind-legs. I could see his mind work. It was almost as if he said aloud: "I'll put that chap at his ease, if it's the last act of my life." He did it too, with as banal a question as ever was asked: "Do you know who my favorite American author is?" From what I knew of him I certainly should not have picked O. Henry, who proved to be the successful entry. For five or six minutes we chatted. I was fully aware that it was like the snake's power over the bird, but it was just as overwhelming and inescapable. And it convinced me of the essential truth of an anecdote Brooke had told me fourteen years before. Lord Balfour and Mr. H. G. Wells had met for the first time at a houseparty. Mr. Wells was then at his most communistic and collective, and accordingly very down on great feudal families. Yet in half an hour he succumbed to what I succumbed to in two minutes, following the charmer

around almost with open mouth. I don't blame him for an instant. A few months later a new book was announced by Mr. Wells called *A Modern Utopia*. In that work the embittered socialist had founded his new house upon the rock of an aristocracy. So our logic is confounded.

Lord Balfour, even from that slight glimpse, remains a strange figure in my sight. I am sure that the clue to him, as far as there could be a clue, was that he was immensely cynical and derived his only real satisfaction from the exercise of his mysterious power. There was nothing hypocritical about it. But there was something comic about that flattery that never went over the border of good taste, yet was near enough that frontier to make one speculate. While the display was on, the recipient wondered helplessly whether or no men were as easy as that, at the very moment when it was proved in his own person that they were. I believe Lord Balfour's career showed that he could not hold men's loyalty long. Perhaps he hardly cared to. But I never saw in my life anyone who could win them so quickly by arts so transparent.

The next morning the conference met for the last time. I supposed Sir Israel would have forgotten his promise, but not at all. At the end of the meeting he offered me up on the altar. "Mr. Shaw," he said, "may I present Mr. Bacon, an American humorist?" The bolt fell instantly: "My God, what a thing to say of a man!" There may be a suitable answer. I didn't have it.

But I did have a car waiting for me, and even Mr. Shaw will consent to be taken where he wishes to go. I'm glad he did, for I found him an entertaining companion. He uttered no cosmic truths, but he hasn't done that much anyhow, and I might not be worthy. However, I found his small talk diverting. As we passed Covent Garden, full of cabbages, broken crates, and wilted flowers, he asked me sud-

denly, "Did you ever see a play of mine called *Pygmalion*?" "No, but I've read it." "Well, that's where it started." Why that pleased me I cannot say, though it might be due to the irrelevance which is one of his principal gifts. Again apropos of nothing in particular: "I have been writing a book on socialism, two hundred and fifty thousand words. Cost the world twelve and a half plays." This remark emboldened me to say something myself. I said that in spite of an implanted prejudice, I thought *St. Joan* was a wonderful thing. He seemed positively embarrassed, almost stuttering in what looked to me like confusion, as he replied: "Nonsense! Nonsense! You could have written it yourself, if you had had the sense to go to the original documents."

I had contracted to deliver him at the "Spectator Office." And he directed the chauffeur through the twisty streets, incidentally affording evidence in support of the truth that Londoners often know as little about London as they are apt to know of other matters. Presently he said, "Here we are," and I hopped out to bid him farewell. He looked about him in a dazed and helpless manner and then said in the tone of a discoverer: "Why this isn't the 'Spectator Office.' This is where I came to get married." Just what we learn from this I do not know, though it waked hazy memories of *Man and Superman*. The episode seemed symbolic. On his way to get married, by a similar error, did he arrive at the "Spectator Office"?

One more anecdote about him. Two years later my wife and I entered the *Accademia di belle arti* in Venice at what proved to be the uninteresting end. Presently we found ourselves in a huge *salle* containing in the first place gigantic seventeenth-century depictions from the Cross, the kind that look like railroad accidents, and in the second Mr. George Bernard Shaw in solitary contemplation of those dubious chefs-d'oeuvre. I told my wife she was for it, and

introduced him to her. He beamed upon her and asked if we had seen the Carpaccios yet. We said we were on our way. In a tone of restrained excitement he adjured us not to miss a particular Madonna. "Not in the big Carpaccio room, just outside it. I want you to look at it with especial care, because the Christ-child is a portrait of the infant H. G. Wells."

To me he seemed a most engaging mixture of the diverting and the kindly. He is so quick in the uptake that competition is farcical, but it is utterly impossible to bear malice. Nevertheless, I think this is true of him. He is only superficially informed and readily makes game of what he readily fails to understand.* It is profoundly silly to talk about Darwin as if he were an obscurantist dolt, about Pavlov as if he were an empirical sadist. His beautiful clear English can do nothing for foolish ideas, if they are foolish. He seems to me a good deal like a cart-tail orator who pretends to be getting at the facts, but in reality is only anxious to discomfit an adversary. And the reason for his Brobdignagian success is that he appeals to the huge faction of the semi-educated who derive pleasure from the pretense of exercising their minds. It was a sad day for English literature when a young Irishman, who had the rare gift of interpreting people, encountered himself in one of the emptier places of his own intellect, and said: "Sir, I perceive you are a man of ideas." However trenchant his epigram, or burning his eloquence, he has only struck twelve twice, on each occasion profitably forgetting a rather impotent philosophy and harking back to the engaging mystery of personality. I may quote in this connection four lines of my own:

* It is fair to say that there is one subject on which Mr. Shaw is an expert. My friend Mr. Albert Jay Nock informs me that few men understand the English Poor Laws as well as Mr. Shaw. This is to his eternal credit. It is human enough, but still mysterious, that he should be dogmatic and vociferous on subjects concerning which he knows nothing and practically silent with respect to matters on which his competence is generally acknowledged.

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*The same man who, with exquisite unkindness,
Mocked his gross mock at Helen Keller's blindness,
Wrote, by direction of a God unknown,
"Caesar and Cleopatra" and "St. Joan."*

All of us at the conference had been given cards for a month at the Athenaeum. My only knowledge of English Clubs was derived from *The Newcomes* and *Pendennis*, which shows how far one may stray from actuality. I went in for luncheon alone one day. The place was crowded with Oliver Lodges and General Forcursues, and it made me feel timid. I sat down at a solitary little octagonal table, and as protective coloration ordered veal-and-ham pie and a bottle of stout. On another little table which positively touched mine lay a copy of the *Scotsman*, which I picked up and read until my meal should be served. Simultaneously with the arrival of my weal-an'-ammer, a member sat down at the other twin table, and I was guilty of what might have been error. I laid the *Scotsman* down in such a manner that he might consider it in his sphere of influence, if he desired, and dug into my victuals. The man took up the paper, and then, contrary to the Law of Nature, Act of Parliament, and the Custom of Kent, a voice spoke. "News from the North," it said. I realized that I was being accosted, and for a second I think I knew the sensations of an American virgin when approached upon the streets of Paris. But I was trapped. I replied with "as monosyllabic a monosyllable as ever was uttered within the limits of the empire." But nothing would serve. "It's a good paper," said the man, absolutely luring me. I yielded the information that it was better than some of ours, and was at once involved in conversation with a very pleasant person indeed. He was Sir George Buchanan, not the ambassador but an official in the Health Ministry, and he made that meal amusing. At the end of it he said, "You're only here for a month and they won't give you the good brandy. Come with me and we'll

have some of the good brandy." That was all right from my standpoint, and we sat down in the smoking-room on the Pall Mall side. Just as the brandy came, I grew conscious of the fact that something was happening in the thoroughfare without. My companion looked up. "O by George, you ought to see this. His nibs is going by. The King's going by to look at the new buildings in Regent Street. He's being welcomed into his loyal city of Westminster." "It would be interesting," I said doubtfully, as I looked at the solid phalanxes of British backs that filled all three windows. "Nothing easier," he said, and rising tapped one of the backs on the shoulder: "Make room for this Colonial!" On this hateful false pretense I was literally pushed against the pane and enjoyed a rather picturesque show, not to mention the remarkably explicit commentary of the spectators around me on the decline of pageantry in England. When the spectacle was over a magnificent man, really splendid to look upon, came up to me and said in the most cordial manner: "Where are you from? I am from the Colonies too. I am from New Zealand." A dozen men with whom I had been chatting looked at me curiously, as I made what seems to me the only possible reply: "I'm from New England." It didn't seem to me much of a sally, and I was wholly unprepared for the explosion of mirth which followed. The beautiful and genuine Colonial flushed, as if something had been said at his expense. In a sense it had. He was the great physicist, Lord Rutherford, and, inasmuch as he was death on the bonds of empire, his friends were delighted when his morbid propensities were thus accidentally exposed. However, he was a nice man as well as a great one who bore no malice. I had a wonderful chat with him for half an hour, with much talk of Gilbert Lewis whom he knew and admired. Lord Rutherford was something to run into, even if one had the haziest understanding of his knowledge and power. It was impossible not to feel the reality of

both. The episode destroyed forever any notion I might have had that the English are cold and reserved and that their clubs are like unto them.

There was another encounter, interesting to us—with the three Sitwells. Osbert Sitwell we had met in New York at Sidney Howard's. At that time I had developed a brutal prejudice against them, and went to meet him more out of unsympathetic curiosity than for any reasonable or laudable motive. I still see nothing to write home about in much of their writing. But I found Osbert really entertaining in America and cordial in England, exactly the reverse, on both counts, of what we are too apt to fancy the English to be. We had tea with the trinity a couple of times in Carlyle Gardens. And I had the grace to form new opinions. In the first place it penetrated my mind finally that their bitterness was genuine and that their eccentricity was only pose in the sense that we all strike attitudes when we get involved in actual phobias. The chief phobia of the Sitwells is what is called "County." They are down on the English equivalent of the late George Apley. And no one has a better right, for that is the pit whence they were digged. I knew their remarkable mother in Florence and I once met their extraordinary father at Monte Guffone. Both parents were rebels against something, though it might not be County, and the children hewed to the line. Naturally they carried the war against the conventional life and thought of a caste to a point where the war became a convention in itself. In due course each of them was deliberately creating occasions of offense against cricketers and fox-hunters with catastrophic success. And I now know that Osbert's expression of dismay, when he discovered that I enjoyed my tennis, was not affectation. Tennis is enjoyed by all his enemies. I think he endeavored to be magnanimous about my weakness.

Their eccentricity and bitterness are real, but so are their powers when they escape from their idiosyncrasies. And no

one can be more pleasant and human than they. The worst thing that can be said about them is that they are not always so well informed as they trick themselves into believing. They really think they know, and often they have investigated. But I am far from believing that Miss Sitwell's book on Pope tells us much about that magnificent poet. It tells us a great deal about Miss Sitwell, among other things that she mistook a keen interest in the subject for knowledge concerning it. And her poetry, for the greater part, consists of firefly gleams in a night of obscurity. In this her work differs from much contemporary poetry, which has plenty of obscurity but no fireflies.

I have only glanced at Sacheverell Sitwell's books. But Osbert in *Before the Bombardment* came parlous near to writing a great novel. I think he damaged it by succumbing to one of our contemporary maladies, the disposition, when you have a living idea by the tail, to decline into farce with a view to avoiding the solemn. Half the writers of the time have weakened on occasion. And it is too bad. Solemnity can be avoided in a manner less obvious. I also liked *Triple Fugue* which is fine satire, however rough the handling of Jack Squire, who is much too good for the cavalier measure meted out to him. It seems to be a law of nature that satirists get angry with the wrong people. When the fit is on them, they run out of humor, and then Pope gets sorry for himself and dirks Addison, Byron's knife is sharpened for Walter Scott, and, to compare small things with great, I myself have been known to fly into a fine printer's ink passion at persons not necessarily so black as I painted them. The hell of it is that at the time it feels genuine.

The personal gentleness and beautiful manners of the Sitwells are beyond praise. I liked the lot—and some of their books. After such pleasures we returned to America to prepare for Florence, where the tools of the masons would soon be clinking on the alterations in the Villa Emilia.

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THE three and a quarter years from the autumn of '28 to the end of January, '32, are the kind of memory that I wish more people had. From the standpoint of many Americans ours was a cock-eyed sort of life, but it wasn't trivial, and it is connected in my mind with great and entirely legitimate pleasures, and with very few regrets.

We sailed in October in a time of triumph. As far as Americans were concerned, the World was conquered and the future was secure. It makes me ill to think of the folly I personally believed, the Fool's Paradise into which we had, with very few exceptions, wandered. Naturally enough, with increasing income and a favorable exchange, over the sea our galleys went. The fact that I had real motives for going doesn't make things much better. One hates to have fallen into an unreasonable net of belief, to have been blind to writing on so many walls.

At the time I was. There was mirth in the air and some of it was real. The children had never seen strange countries, and the mere novelty of things to them made the voyage a true delight. Gibraltar and Naples were Bagdad and Xanadu in their sight, or better still, as the poet remarked, Gibraltar and Naples. At Genoa, Lieutenant del Prato, the

omnipotent factotum I had had the sagacity to employ, was waiting for us and no expedition ever disembarked with greater felicity, trunks, motors, Sealyham terrier, everything. That very night we were in a going concern in the city of our desire. The villa was as perfect as the work of man's hand ever gets, and the garden was a back-drop for Pierrot and Columbine. Below it the beautiful podere was a gulf of green quiet in the midst of the city, where a child might play forever. The Fausts were there to welcome us and our cousins the Peace Hazards had taken a villa near us. It was all beautifully satisfactory. The mobs of smiling servants who never seemed weary of pleasing, even if they did steal the brandy, the delightful friends who never interfered with work in the long telephone-free mornings, the tennis every afternoon, the little dinners, delicious and informal, at our own and other houses, all those things made a good life.

It wasn't in any respect an idle life. It bore no resemblance whatever to existence on the Riviera. Practically everyone we knew worked extremely hard and all the time, writing, painting, silversmithing, music. They were really at it, Faust with his poetry all morning, and his pulp-paper stories all afternoon, when he was weary; Dick Blow, so averse of sunlight for painting that he let it interfere seriously with his tennis; Bill Yarrow slaving over his big Princeton murals; Herbert Durst at his squadrons of silver ships. Later there was Roger Burlingame from Porto Fino. And many others. But during those years it was of Faust that I saw most.

My intimacy with him had begun in California where he had been one of that matchless group that created English 106. That intimacy has continued over twenty-six years in every vicissitude and I hope it lasts three times that. We differ on almost every conceivable subject to such an extent that, as Faust himself once put it, it gives each of us a species of shock when, without provocation, we find ourselves in

agreement about anything. An evening has been practically ruined by some chance and wholly unforeseen failure to oppose on one part or the other. But the result has been to me at least a source of infinite pleasure, whether the bone of contention were blank verse or politics, Attic tragedy or a stroke in tennis, personalities of men or the qualities of wines. Blood has been shed on both sides about all these questions and many more. And here Faust was, three minutes' walk across the podere, for over three years. All I had to do was to drop over and smite his shield. Out he would prance snorting and snuffing the battle. It may be objected that this sort of thing is waste of time. If that be so, a great deal more time should be wasted and courses should be given in the art, openly and ostensibly, not disguised as English 21 or Philosophy 103. That one of us ever shook the other's conviction, I do not believe. But it is salutary to become convinced of the existence of another's obstinate imbecility, if it does no more than persuade you of the innate rightness of your own beliefs. I do not regret those battles for justice and liberty. And as Faust sulks in the tents of Hollywood, I hope he does not either.

But life had a thousand surfaces in that town, each one with its own characteristic reflection. It was the happy hunting-ground of revelers who had strayed out of the worlds of diplomacy and courts, of blue blood and parvenu, of rich roturiers and poor nobles, who, it seemed to me, had much the same ideas. This was painfully apparent, when a decayed marquis tried to sell me some new gadget for the house over my own dinner table. Even an American drummer knows there is a time and a place. It was pleasant to run into Julia Marlowe at a tea and find her as lovely in her retirement as she had been behind footlights. A Russian princess who had become an Italian countess diverted me particularly. She was only eighty, but her recollections were malicious and macabre. She had seen d'Annunzio in a mask, being made love to by a dozen women at once. And the

first thing she remembered was being taken by her nurse to the church on her father's estate to behold a religious ceremony. The peasantry at the moment were poleaxing Jews in front of the high altar, a spectacle now part of the education of adolescent Germans.

As a contrast to that entertaining old survival, I may mention the lady (she was emphatically that) who proposed to herself the curious revenge of entertaining at tea the judge who some years before had sentenced her to gaol. The judge, discovering in the nick who his hostess of the afternoon was to be, shrank pusillanimously from the ordeal. Florence is the only city I've ever lived in where a lady would dream of offering tea to a man who'd done that to her. It is also the only city where nobody cared whether he had or not. I do not forget either that British matron of renown, who, when invited to luncheon by an American lady of credit, sent word by the butler that she herself could not come but that her seven house-guests would. One is thrown into serious perplexity by such an episode. Was the British female really as stupid as all that? Or did she merely give way to her personal propensity for bad taste and worse manners? Incidentally it was an Englishwoman of the very greatest charm and courtesy, who, with tears of humorous wrath in her eyes, related to me that equivocal history. My informant was of the real English, whose qualities everyone should wish to possess, as opposed to the unreal English, whose qualities everyone must take pains to avoid.

I suppose we didn't see enough of Italians, though I got to like many of them enormously. There is nothing nicer than the nice ones. They have fine manners, quick sympathy, and often extraordinary cultivation. On the other hand I think they are frequently curiously limited, more so than people no more cultivated than they in other countries. It took me some time to learn to speak well enough

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to carry on a conversation, and that in part may account for the limitation which I have mentioned, my fault rather than theirs. But I rather think it is due to another reason. They don't, or won't, or can't travel in reality, and seldom in their minds. So clever a man as Papini is simply grotesque the minute foreign achievement or thought is mentioned. He drums Kant out of the regiment of philosophy on the ground that all Germans are repulsive anyway. And I have heard Casals cheered to the echo after playing a Haydn concerto, the outburst being immediately followed by a tremendous yell: "Viva Mascagnil" It isn't that they are chauvinistic, and they are invariably courteous. But they take an almost pharisaic pleasure in their own culture, without much reference to other possibilities. One Italian, to whom the stricture does not apply, put it in so many words to me: "It is a bad country for thinkers." He was of course alluding to the regime. But the sort of interest in other people's ideas and problems that one finds in democratic Europe is not common. When you find it, as you do, it is correspondingly charming.

One of the entertaining facts of life in the city is the endemic Englishman. Generally he has lived there not less than thirty years and has been conspicuously successful in his battle not to learn the language. But he knows everyone and is liked by everyone. One of the most diverting and agreeable permanent features of the landscape was Reginald Turner, to whom the details about knowing everyone and being liked apply. Concerning him Garrick's epigram on Goldsmith might be reversed for he talked a great deal better than he wrote. Of this he was not unaware, as his remarks to a globe-trotter indicated: "Ah, you have just arrived from India? On the *'Rajah of Lahore'*? Did you by chance notice a novel of mine in her library? There is one. I have traced each of the eleven copies sold to its place of rest."

Anyhow at a men's luncheon he was perfect company. His trick of blinking first one eye and then the other somehow contributed to the odd amiability of his talk. I have always been definitely impressed by his theory that he had written himself out under the pseudonym of Jane Austen. The corroborative detail was striking. "Every one of those novels was written on a yacht," he would say, and your fancy, leaping with his, explored the factitious origins of *Pride and Prejudice* on blue water. I read a story by Reggie in *The Yellow Book*, to which he had contributed half a lifetime before. It did not bear out the Jane Austen theory. But it was his connection with literature which was interesting, rather than his performance. He was a specialist in death-beds. For he had been in the room when Oscar Wilde died beneath his means, and again when the uneven powers of D. H. Lawrence were frozen at their marvelous source. Any distinguished man of letters who may happen to read this is explicitly warned that Reggie may conceivably add him to his strange collection.

Of Lawrence I once heard Reggie remark that he had a grudge against the universe because his father was not a duke. The fact is pretty apparent in every novel of Lawrence's I have read. The snobbery of the proletariat is visible in the unvarying formula of the man of humble origins who rejects with scorn the lascivious appeals of the nobly born consort of Potiphar. That formula is particularly attractive to convinced democrats, who, as has been noted, are the only true believers in aristocracy. Aristocrats know better. They generally believe in democracy. The sore place in Lawrence's mind perhaps also accounts for his indecent personal cruelty to people, like Michael Arlen, who had been kind to him, though nothing can explain his conduct to the nice old Englishman at Turin, who took him in when he was penniless, only to be pilloried in a merciless sketch, sold

for money, by his horrible guest. Lawrence was unquestionably a genius, but what a boring one! No greater descriptive power has ever been used to express a more unpalatable personality.

With Turner I once or twice encountered Lawrence's mortal enemy, the fantastic Norman Douglas. He was a big, strong, fair animal, who might have stepped out of "Handley Cross." As one passed him on the Tornabuoni, one felt an instinctive urge to shout "Stolen away" or sing "John Peel" at him. No man could possibly look less like the author of the diverting and graceful *South Wind*, or of the abysmal and labored *In the Beginning*, of which two works I venture to guess that their author prefers the second. He was getting up his famous collection of obscene limericks at the time, a task for which he was magnificently qualified. Certainly he was, and still may be, a various-minded man. I am told that his monograph on the herpetology of Baden is a classic among lovers of snakes and lizards. And his very failures show that there is practically nothing he doesn't know. Around him was an atmosphere hardly worth analyzing into its constituent gases, but roughly like this, 10 per cent real viciousness past or present, 25 per cent enjoyment of a sinister reputation, and the rest unsupported rumor. I think he had had a hard life and himself to thank, but that he was objective about it. It is tragic that his later work has been so—I was going to write putrid, but puling is clearly more descriptive. His exquisite English only helps you to see how pediculous are his ideas. And as one considers the insects, imperfectly preserved in the ephemeral amber of his style, one wonders with Pope, "how the devil they got there!"

Possibly to my loss I only encountered another local celebrity once. He is no doubt immortalized in the ensuing verses in which one word of Italian slang requires explana-

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tion. *Scorpione* is the argot of the Tornabuoni for the sort of British old maid who infests all museums and tea shops.

*Down the Via Tornabuoni
March the ranks of Scorpioni,
Reading swiftly as they run
Works by Mr. Berenson,
Who sits tight in Settignano
On his cinquecento ano,
Praying for more Scorpioni
On the Via Tornabuoni.*

Among the changing stars that drifted through Florence from time to time, I was particularly attracted to Richard Aldington, though I was never especially intimate with him. Against him I have but one grievance, that he once brought to luncheon with me a small poetaster, to strangle whom would have struck anyone but the humane Richard as a perfectly elegant idea. I suppose Richard was nice to him on the principle of opposites, because the creature was unfortunate and incapable and ill bred. There is something about Aldington's mind and nature that I can't put my finger on, except to say that I like to go along with him. If he has a difficulty which is none to me, I see at once why it is so to him. And this goes for speech with him and for his essays and poetry, but not altogether for the famous *Death of a Hero*. That work is brilliant and powerful, but I don't think that the insanity and evil of battle are sufficiently demonstrated by reporting their effect on small-time artists caught up in the whirlwind. When I first read the book ten years ago it knocked my eye out, and God knows there are masterly moments. But you are left with a feeling that if the War Generation was as ineffective as all that, they'd have made a magnificent mess without the assistance of a war.

Three years doesn't begin to be enough to learn even a smattering of Florence, whether of its art, its history, or its

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social organization. It is not a gay town. Café life is limited. Night life hardly exists. There is fifty times as much excitement at Bologna, only two hours away by motor. That city has what you read about. But in Florence, the prey of the foreigner, entertainment is strictly private. The best restaurant was in a hotel. And one solitary night-club lived on the expectation of a retreating future. I was in it once after a stag-party at Dick Blow's. Bill Yarrow and I stepped in for a drink, for which I think there was not the faintest necessity. In that temple of mirth we found a one-legged man and a woman, apparently a street-walker, who was warming her latter end against a typically unresponsive Italian radiator. Toulouse-Lautrec could have caught the futile look of those incompetent revelers who were not only strayed but apparently stolen. They didn't even speak to each other. Anyone who wants noise, excited faces, and nocturnal rhythm had better not seek them in the Flower Town.

On the other hand about eleven o'clock in the morning there is a gentle acceleration of life in the bars, hardly more noticeable than the rise of the tide in the Mediterranean. You can just barely see that there is such a thing. People drift into Doney's or Alfredo's to expatiate and confer. Italians and Barbarians murder each other's languages, gossip, and crack small jokes that never by any chance allude to public policy. And I thoroughly enjoyed that mild and well-behaved cocktail hour, which was harmless and civilized, and as remote as possible from unlicked American orgies, in which I have too often done my fair share.

In spite of the limitation set upon them by their brutal government, the Italians still talk well. Their speech is elegant and their wit is pointed, even if the pun is in high esteem. An instance will serve. A member of the great Strozzi family, famous for eight hundred years, got into serious and louche financial difficulties. While this scandal was still piping hot, a degenerate Marchese Guadagni mur-

dered his lawyer's elderly chamber-maid, when she caught him stealing 800 lire from her master's desk. The Via Tornabuoni commented neatly on the decline of the great nobility, as follows: "Gli Strozzi fanno illeciti guadagni ed i Guadagni fanno illeciti strozzi." This may be worked into an English quatrain for such as have no Italian.

*Now in our Florence there are stains
On scutcheons of uncounted quarters.
The Slaughters make illicit gains,
And the Gains make illicit slaughters.*

And I personally have always admired Cadorna's typical retort to Clemenceau when the Frenchman said bitterly after Caporetto: "France fights for honor and Italy for money." Cadorna is alleged to have replied: "Yes, we both fight for what we haven't got."

Nevertheless Italian conversation, except in dèr privacy with intimates, suffers from an appalling handicap. One cannot speak seriously about politics, and it is dangerous to speak in jest. Political epigram has taken refuge in the pornographic, and for two reasons is retailed, if at all, in a very low voice. You look around before you speak and even before you listen. The sultry stories, in which Mussolini always gets the dirty end of the stick, are the one form of criticism he has been unable to suppress. And it struck me as odd to find the muse of the lavatory and the brothel working hard on the side of the angels. Strangely enough she is the most unassailable of the enemies of dictators. And in my opinion young Italians can hardly make her acquaintance too soon.

Of course, if people trust you and know that the servants don't speak English, they will speak like human beings without invoking the protection of Venus Verticordia. I shan't forget the shame on the face of a friend the morning after the loathsome boys slapped Toscanini at Bologna. But only

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two voices remain unstilled in all Italy. Though it be a digression I am going to say my say on the subject. One, of course, is the sad and noble voice of Benedetto Croce. No braver man has stood erect in the peninsula since the Roman Empire. His solitary no against three hundred intimidated ayes, when the Senate rubber-stamped the Concordat, outweighs them all. He writes what he pleases and gets it by devious methods beyond the frontiers, whence I hope some of it seeps back through the same channels. He has been subjected to open brutality. His house has been looted. Friends and disciples fear to be seen with him. But he is an opposition in himself, certainly not ignored and perhaps feared by the detestable hierarchy. I suppose when he dies, the big shots will feel their work complete and put up a new monument in ghastly taste suitably inscribed with Virgil's line:

Tantae molis erat, Romanam condere gentem.

They won't either, while the other voice speaks. Mussolini has so far failed to put down that odd mixture of Burns and Mark Twain, who writes under the name of Trilussa. The dictator even made a virtue of necessity and told Emil Ludwig that speech was free in Italy, if it was funny enough. I am still of the opinion that it takes more than one swallow to make a summer. But Trilussa's books may be bought at any bookshop. My copy of his selected verse informs me that 53,000 of his fables have been sold and I'm sure that those thousands do not resemble the French publisher's, "des vrais milles, des milles de cinque cents." When I left in 1932 his verses still occasionally made the censor-combed Italian Front Page. He is the only visible symptom of what was once the wit and humor of a great people. And single-handed he may keep those necessary qualities alive till better times. Greatly daring, I submit a version of his sonnet "The Violinist" as a tribute, though an inadequate one, to

a poet wholly unknown outside his own land, and one infinitely greater than any writer for the blasted regime.

THE VIOLINIST

*Once in a while to the restaurant there came
An awful violinist, runs the story,
Who did a murder on "Il Trovatore"
And things to "Cavalleria" without name.
One night a stranger, whom we could not blame,
Screamed out: "We've had enough of all this gory
Racket. Why make us suffer? Go to glory!
God, what a bore! Shut up! Pipe down! For shame!"
At that the fiddler, visibly a limb
Illegitimate of decadent nobility,
Began at once to play the Fascist Hymn.
Whereupon the stranger, suddenly benign,
Saluted with appropriate docility,
Adding sotto voce: "He's done me in, the swine!"*

The more I think of Trilussa, the more he engages my fancy. He doesn't speak for the peasantry, brave, dour, and bewildered, or for the bourgeoisie, timid, anxious, and money-grubbing, or for the nobility, often esurient cadgers, but he is the free voice of the gay, bright, honest-to-God intellect that speaks for all men. He is full to the chin of bitterness and kindness. And his laughter will be ringing in a pleasanter land, when a note, to steal the old figure, will have to be affixed to the "Violinist" to tell schoolboys what the Fascist Hymn was.

The reader has perceived that the subject makes me mad. It may perhaps bore him, but I think the change in my attitude toward Fascism is not without interest. When I first visited Italy after the War, although I had the usual perfunctory American objections to dictatorships, I was as near neutral as a man ever gets on such a question. Also I had a strong feeling that it was the Italians' business, and that a foreigner's views were necessarily bathetic. It may be

that I was even disposed to admire the Duce's raw strength and ability. The man on horseback is not without appeal to persons in no danger of being ridden down. But even in 1925 the propaganda disgusted me. And the Matteotti business couldn't be laughed off. "He didn't do it, but it was a mistake," said a bright lady. I like to keep balanced and all that sort of thing. But the fact is that no communist, howling in Moscow after an inflammatory speech by a commissar who will be liquidated in the next purge, ever felt his entrails revolt more than mine did, and do, against the hateful unsportsmanlike clique that run the Italian works. The whole system is blague, deception, and dishonor, from the mythical march on Rome, which never took place at all, to the trumped-up indecencies of the quarrel fastened by barbarous Italy on primitive and comparatively blameless Ethiopia. For Italy is going barbarous, and Fascism has achieved the impossible. The Mother of Arts has been changed into a savage maenad, whose intellect withers as she yields to the frantic power of her Voodoo-man. Nor is there a man of talent or good will who hasn't retreated into silence which he feels to be dishonorable, or into exile, where he knows how bitter is his bread who climbs another's stair.

Let the regime claim all the material progress it can (nothing to write home about), the disgusting fact remains that, since the fabulous march, not a book, not a statue, not a picture, has appeared among the Italians. There has been some faint scientific radiation, and engines of war, effective enough among savages who had only spears, and Spanish children who had nothing, are built in quantity. But Cincinnati is a hundred times nearer to what life was meant to be than Caesar's city.

The longer I saw it at work (and I never had the faintest trouble myself, for foreigners with a little money are necessary to fascist economy) the more I hated it. And I believe,

in spite of the dragooned plebiscites, that the Italians hate it too. When you have seen a black-shirt pursuing a crowded tram, and not a soul on the car will bother to tell the conductor, you feel that something has been expressed with silent eloquence. People submit, when their priests are beaten up just before election day. "Il bel paese dove il si suona," doesn't think "si," though the word may be put on a ballot. The country simply acquiesces before the menaces of a savage and perfectly organized pressure group. It won't forever. I don't suppose I'll live to see a statue of Lauro de Bosis. But, as the poet said in another connection, the metal that will make it is somewhere between the Alps and Pantelleria.

If this sounds rhetorical and hysterical, I am sorry. It makes me sick when American business men who have made a profitable deal with the regime, or social exquisites who have been flattered to their heart's content during the season in Rome, tell what a lot Mussolini has done for Italy. Just buy a glass of Vermouth in a hill-town above Carrara, and consider how much Mussolini has done for the inn-keeper, who nearly faints at the sight of a fifty-lire note. The system is an outrage on rich and poor alike, and it is a point of honor to say so. And to compromise with it is to yield to it. That cannot be said too often, no matter how badly.

Naturally enough I wasn't perpetually the prey of political hatreds for three years. Other matters interposed. We weren't even in Florence all the time. There was a summer on the beach at Forte di Marmi near Viareggio, when the Libeccio brought up magnificent surf all the way from Africa, and stars were hung aloft every night, certainly not in lone splendor. There was another summer in the Pyrenees, Paris and Switzerland. It is something to take children into Venice for the first time. As a delightful Anglo-American lady put it: "You step out of the ugliest railway-station

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on earth and you're half-way to the moon." And we came to know Siena and San Gimignano like the back of our hand. Sights, like the Palio and the great revived football game between the Whites and the Greens in the square by the Palazzo Vecchio, were almost commonplaces. And I for one got a strange kick out of the terrific "Mille miglia" motor-race, that roared under my garden wall once a year. It may be an obvious remark, but strange images rise in the mind when Alpha Romeos and Lancias hurl down the same road where Hannibal rode his elephants.

The interest to a foreigner was limitless. And yet I know that though it was wise to go to Florence when we did, it was still wiser to leave when we did. We had had magnificent draughts from the fountain, but it is bad for grown-ups to become expatriates and worse for children. The depression of course made a difference, but if it had been better to remain, it could have been managed. And the great motive had ceased to exist. *The Furioso* was complete.

The Furioso is a long poem which swam into my ken in 1923, just after I had finished *Ulug Beg*. I worked on it and thought about it for nine years, for two of them almost exclusively. As I have said, I had in mind a sort of Byronic-Bernesque epic on d'Annunzio, whose extraordinarily hateful personality fascinated me, as a Komodo dragon might fascinate an amateur zoölogist. His very acts of kindness (which never by any chance cost him anything whatever) were rhetoric. And what shall be said of his acts of unkindness? Feeling, which in some form is essential to every kind of greatness, in his formula was preceded by a minus-sign. He lived on the principle of the negation of the humane. When he fled from Fiume, he excused an indecision which was not heroic, on the ground that Italy was not worth fighting for, just as he insulted Eleonora Duse after casting her off. The comparison is old but it is exact. I myself, I

think first of living men, pointed out that the last paragraph of his Constitution of Fiume is a provision for state-supported grand opera. Whatever else he had, he had to have that. Every one of the qualities of the artist, which can, and do, become detestable, was his, good measure pressed down. In his own sight he was a master, a mage. Men were created his slaves and women his mistresses. And there was no limit to the evil he would do either sex in his own interest, if it lay in his power. Whatever was violent was good in his eyes. It is small wonder if the weary Mario Praz, after his pedestrian voyage among the deserts created by de Sade, should call d'Annunzio both a barbarian and a decadent. The qualities are so apparent in him that many people ceased quite early to be deceived by the splendor of his descriptive powers. Such remarks to his address as: "If it isn't incest, it isn't tragedy" show that you can't fool all of them all the time, and the epigram might be profitably meditated by certain American poets and dramatists.

But, as has been said, he never learned the power of great emotions, because he never felt them. The tingle of an adventure or an escapade was the nearest thing to a feeling that he ever knew. The lust of the flesh and the lust for power were his approximations and substitutes for human desire. There is a sentence in "La Beffa di Buccari" which is in every sense a give-away. After describing with great spirit and still greater vanity a reasonably perilous naval exploit in which he took part, he writes: "I find that heroism is like love. You are tired after both." One is not sure that such heroism ever existed, and certain that such love was something else. His concrete journalesque mind never took in the difference between a tragedy and a railroad accident. That is why his typical heroine burns her face off in a fit of naughty temper. That is why his horrors never touch the sublime and seldom escape from the ridiculous.

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Oedipus putting out his eyes after the discovery of his fate has nothing that is not real and incredibly human. But the chorus of the Faledri, blinded and tongueless, in *La Nave*, has nothing that is not Grand Guignol. It does not take Borgese's brilliant book to tell one, that there is just one thing that d'Annunzio could do really well. Like Byron superficially in many things, but actually only in one, he could describe, and to such a pitch that his stage directions are frequently better reading than his dialogue. And his lousiest novel has pictures as true as the psychology is false.

If my feeling about the man and his work are correctly shadowed forth in the preceding remarks, the reader might reasonably wonder why in the devil's name I gave up years of my life to writing a poem about him. The question is reasonable, but so is the answer. D'Annunzio seemed to me a shining symbol of times that were making a violent effort to be glittering, effective, meaningless. The sedulous ape of the superman, "the actual weakling enamored of imaginary force," the Bobadil whose life was in competitive display, the hopeless pursuer of an uncaptured *nouvel frisson*, there was no aspect of his hard, gleaming, gunmetal soullessness that did not itself comment bitterly on the materialist's house of cards. Fail or not, I could write my heart out on the creature. And fail or not, I did.

The book came out in 1932, and created, if possible, even less excitement than is usually manifest when my volumes from time to time appear. Such opinions as there were were opposed. The *Times* was enthusiastic but I thought without much discrimination. Miss Babette Deutsch, who had liked *Animula Vagula*, wrote the only review that ever gave me real pain, and I could tell from the tone that to hurt was her principal object. What flicked her on the raw I do not know. But she did her best to do as much damage as possible. And her powers are not contemptible, at least in such

a direction.* Alexander Laing reviewed the work in a tone of lament for abilities now lost, which he had been kind enough to discover in *Ulug Beg*. And a curious counterpoise turned up from what to me was an unforeseen quarter. Like other people I occasionally suffer from a mild form of persecution-mania. For some years I had regarded the little magazine *Poetry*, which did not wholly "die to make verse free," as an organ which had its axe sharpened for me. I don't know how the impression originated. Nor do I think I was ever attacked in its pages. It may be that I had simply been ignored. Anyhow the seed of suspicion had germinated and grown into a quite stately shrub of prejudice in my mind. And after my manner I had mocked the paper and its editor in print. Therefore it probably served me right, when Miss Harriet Monroe wrote such a review of *The Furioso*, as youthful poets dream. From my standpoint she didn't miss a trick. She called attention in no uncertain terms to virtues that I thought I perceived in the poem. She spoke of others I had ignored, and with none of the picayune qualifications, to which authors are accustomed, and which critics almost invariably employ. I couldn't believe my eyes. Not even Gamaliel Bradford's review of *Ulug Beg* was so definitely off the deep end as the comment of

* I have no right to regard this assault with too much bitterness. Twenty years ago, early in my pleasant connection with "The Saturday Review of Literature," I attacked a volume of poems in a manner which I have never ceased to regret. I do not think my judgment was at fault, but the tone of my diatribe was something not to be proud of. A year later I accidentally found out that the author had really been wounded. Since the commission of that error I have sedulously avoided anything calculated to injure the human dignity of any writer whose book has come my way to review. He or she may write what seems to me not up to snuff. In that case it is my business and perhaps my duty to say so. But it is not my business or duty to say, "What can you expect of a publisher's assistant, or a jewel salesman, or an osteopath?" as the case may be. In this connection I have been frequently reproached on the ground that I was a college professor. So I was for thirteen years. But it is fifteen years since I delivered a lecture, and the charge in any case is irrelevant. If I write bad poetry, I write bad poetry, but not for that reason. A. E. Housman wrote some noticeably superior verse in spite of the same disqualification.

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a lady whom for years I had regarded as a sinister and inimical figure. The joke was quite evidently on me. I told her so in a letter. And for once in my life I found myself sharing to the full a literary opinion of Miss Harriet Monroe.

Poets are not necessarily such fools as they look. And if time is suffered to elapse, they have, beyond the bystander, the power to see the difference between what was intended and what was achieved. *The Furioso* comes off better when subjected to this test than *Ulug Beg*. The public of these times betrayed no unconquerable interest in it, but I do not think it impossible that a public at some other time might. I hope so. The book is more compact and formed than *Ulug Beg*. It is also better informed and, in spite of Miss Deutsch, it has a gentler spirit. Now and then I discover readers who have been pleased. It is something to a poet to find that he has rung the bell, even if it be only in widely separated villages in Gaul.

The Italian Sojourn ended. Our departure was like the migration of a people. The horror of those packing-cases I shall never forget, unless I make a memorandum of it. We sailed through bleak wintry seas as once through mild autumnal waters. One of the nicest college presidents I know, in his state-room on the *Roma*, pulled a cocktail party in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, who in 1932 still guaranteed the Eighteenth Amendment. We had come home to an America where no one wore the look of triumph and self-satisfaction that had been so characteristic in 1928.

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*So at length, by God's bounty,
 I am back in the South County.
 These are my woods. This is my sky.
 Those are my wild-geese honking high.
 Under brown beech-leaf, past dispute,
 That is my arbutus-shoot.
 Down in my marsh my hyla croaks,
 While Venus sets between my oaks.
 There skim my may-flies to surprising
 Disaster, where my trout are rising.
 My shadblow's yet but a green blur,
 But there will come my tanager,
 And down my pasture, swooping low,
 My oriole will peck my crow.
 My title in these things endures,
 Provided I can make them yours.*

WHAT we returned to with new eyes was the South County of Rhode Island, which has always been lovely in my sight, but was even lovelier because of the bright years in Europe. Many my betters have loved the region and said so. I see no reason for not following their example.

Foremost among them, and, I think, the ablest despite

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certain eccentricities, stands that curious mixture of Tristram Shandy and New England Quaker, "Shepherd" Tom Hazard. He compares his Paradise freely with the Islands of the Hesperides, and even pretends that it is identical with the fabled Atlantis. The irony is a little artificial perhaps. There is nothing spectacular about the South County. Motorists on the post road seem rarely to note anything especial. The hills are ancient and gentle. Peak and precipice do not beetle or lower. Even a New Yorker's eye sees at a glance that the soil is poor and sandy, a fact which has saved for us the intrinsic beauty of the land. It is a country of oak and beech and savin, of deliriously lovely streams paved with cress and walled with wild azalea, of magnificent marshes full of pepperidge and huckleberries, and of cobalt bays and estuaries. A handful of towns are scattered about in it, most of them unhappily now perverted by the Socony-Woolworth style. But if Wakefield and Westerly are as offensively ugly as intelligent effort can make them, Kingston is a pure jewel of late eighteenth-century domestic architecture, and as charming a thing to look on as can be found in America. The white or yellow houses under the great elms, the spike of the graceful church, the lanes tree-bordered that lead from the village street, have quaintness and poetry that make you think of Cranford, and at the same time of something stately and Emersonian.

The people who inhabit even the ugliest of these towns have not declined from their fathers, who were once described in a phrase of sesquipedalian Johnsonian sonority, by the late Dr. Wharton. He called them "the quintuple distillation of irreconcilability." Quintuple is not a mere intensifying word. They are "come-outers" five times over, from England, from Holland, from Plymouth, from Massachusetts Bay, from Providence Plantations. Independence of mind, whether the result of genuine thought or of mere perverse contrariety, is a marked element of their natures.

Only last year one of my neighbors paid, as has been his custom, a tax which he deems unjust in copper cents, with a view to making life as difficult as possible for the collector. They admire independence so much that they have been known to forgive it in others. And I am sure that there is no surer way to their hearts than to swing in an orbit marked by some incalculable eccentricity. They respect the individual. Like other Yankees they hate to commit themselves, but Robert Coffin's men of the Kennebec are almost exuberant in opinion by contrast with the true-born son of Washington County. "Mebbe," as all students of the animal have pointed out, is as much as he will say when he is in full accord with you and quite prepared to go to the bat. This produces town-meetings full of surprises for everyone concerned, for they come out stiffly for or against, as if from an ambush in their minds. Nothing is more exasperating to people accustomed to yes or no on relatively minor matters. The hunted look on the face of a New Yorker, who has had occasion to hire a boat or employ a carpenter during his first summer at Matunuck or Saunderstown, is easily accounted for and well worth seeing. If he has the courage to return he may outgrow it. And yet our people can be incomparably frank. My grandmother was a particularly beautiful woman, who at the age of thirty-five had her beauty strangely enhanced. Her black hair turned white in part, and the Whistler plume was much admired. At Kingston station an elderly farmer spoke to her, "Be you Rowley Hazard's wife?" "Yes." "Young Rowley's?" "Yes." "My, how you hev' broke!" I'm the tenth generation in the land and I've spent half a lifetime trying to fathom them. Finally I have learned a little wisdom in the resigned manner of a Kipling Anglo-Indian, baffled by the Orient. I give them up as simply as if I were a Connecticut or Massachusetts outlander, the object of their amused pity. Shepherd Tom on that point is more outspoken. "I

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was," he says, "brought up to fear God and love my neighbor as myself, and to hate the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay and the Black Presbyterians of Hartford." Something of that spirit of humorous but recalcitrant chauvinism still broods over the Pettaquamscutt, as if there were in the region some secret learning not to be known elsewhere.

Yet anyone who will take the trouble to break down their reserve with reasonable courtesy, will find them extremely attractive. Whatever tendency they have to pull the visitor's leg a little is neutralized by a consideration for human dignity and true kindness. And their behavior in moments of real trouble is worth seeing. I can give a splendid instance. I was foreman of the Grand Jury during a session of the Court at Kingston. A squalid case of *détournement de mineur* came before us. And the wife of him against whom we found a particularly true bill and the hog-like sixteen-year-old moron girl, his paramour (though the word is much too romantic), testified before seventeen good men and true. It was a regular Tobacco Road set-up. And I thought to myself, "O God, some goat will laugh." My fears were groundless. Greater gentleness and delicacy I never saw anywhere. The unhappy wife, who was visibly heartbroken, was treated like a great lady, and they showed the most unattractive girl that ever took her pitcher to the well, a consideration so great that I think even she was vaguely aware that she deserved none. It was about as civilized a scene as I have had the honor to witness. The fact is I have very good neighbors. And I wish they may find me as agreeable as I find them.

Nearly a hundred years ago, certain amiable persons from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia in some way discovered the pleasant land. I just barely remember the huge form of Edward Everett Hale who came with whole tribes of lesser Hales and established a dynasty still reigning in Matunuck. But they were not so numerous as the unknown

nations of the Philadelphians, who absolutely conquered and took possession of the province of Saunderstown, to such an extent that they became the subject of "the judicious poet."

Hey diddle diddle, the Cope and the Biddle!
To Saunderstown we go,
Where Whartons and Bories appear in their glories,
And Wisters all in a row.
Nothing is brainier than Pennsylvania,
So much the prophets declare.
What can be solider than the Cadwalader?
God lives on Rittenhouse Square.

They became part of the land. Its beauty possessed them in its slow way. Of course they are there mainly in summer. But they make sporadic raids even in January blizzards, and have finally earned the grudging respect of those whom at first they oppressed by mere numbers. They are as much a part of the fauna of the region as we are ourselves. And one of them meant South County to me quite as much as any aboriginal Robinson of them all. Owen Wister died only a few weeks ago and we lost something that belonged to us as much as to the church which is in Philadelphia. For forty years he had given me every reason to love him that an older man can give a younger one. He was invariably gay, his conversation, light at first blush, always gave me something to remember, and his criticism, favorable or otherwise, of my books was the most valuable imaginable, because he came at a success or a failure from the standpoint of a skilful writer. His dinner table at Crowfield was a place where beautiful courtesy and delicious talk were as endemic as the plague on a Chinese waterfront. And if there is a thing I am proud of, it is that he was used during the last few years to invite me formally to dinner with him *à deux* at Long House in Bryn Mawr. No man ever gave another a better time than he gave me. A simple meal, a bottle of

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Hermitage, and brandy under the noble Reynolds portrait of his great-great-great-aunt, Mrs. Siddons, while he discoursed on Poe, or the West before barbed-wire, would set up any man for a year. No one can mourn the departure of that wit and courtesy more than I.

The true believers have brought us nothing but good. But we are forced by another sect to know that we are a summer resort. The whole incomparable shore is held by the enemy from June to September. Happily they are timid and seldom go far from the captured beaches. But wherever they do go, locusts warping on the Eastern Wind are not more terrible than they. Whether in the Rolls or in the 1934 Chevrolet they are apt to be flies in the ointment and frogs in the chamber. And I fancy that even tradesmen who profit from the horde, nourish secret regrets, in spite of ledgers in the black. Because of them gas-station springs up by gas-station. Their rustic retreats have their front lawns in the back yards of their neighbors. The bill-board obscures or destroys a view, and their car-radios bellow the imbecile lyrics of the hour. What they can do to destroy the amenities they do—or at any rate attempt. To quote Walter Lippmann, quoting Aristophanes, "Whirl is king," and his bastard son Swing is master of ceremonies. Yet every stratum of society seems to be having a less entertaining time than it might, except for actual athletes on the courts and the links, who are in a sense getting what the land has to offer. When a bunch of subdebs spend an hour on the beach discussing the personal advantages of a life-guard, the polite explanation is that they are not having a pleasant summer. The Adonis is evidently a surrogate for something missing. And by that I don't imply that the young persons are erotically starved. I should say that was the least of their troubles. But evidently they have lost touch with something necessary and blunder after a substitute.

Those people don't know our small exquisite rivers and

our incredible lakes, and wouldn't care if they did. They are ignorant of water-meadows studded with orchids, and of swamps that are the last kick of the rhododendron as they are the southern limit of the Arctic hare. They lost the oriole at the Beach Club and the tanager at a hot-dog stand. Waves of laurel in the Polydore underwood, not being for sale by Abercrombie and Fitch, are without value. And worst of all the people of the region, whose wisdom and idiom are alike originally charming, are, in the sight of the locusts, unreal quaint creatures who know nothing of the glories of the Iridium Room or the bar of the *Queen Mary*.

Indian Summer is doubly delightful when the pest has departed. Then life resumes its pleasant rhythm, no longer oppressed by a spurious substitute. The maple goes red and yellow, the oak russet, and the savin has more than ever its veiled Egyptian mystery. The land is fresh and clean, a place where a myth might be born, and at any rate simplicity can live undisturbed till the next infestation.

There is no way to express the love which the true nympholept, native or foreign-born, has for the low hills, the lakes, the rivers, and the woods. Horace touched the same emotion in the Seventh Ode, and I say after him: "Others may praise towered Manhattan, or San Francisco of the Sunset Sea. But Chicago, city of the steer, nay of the hog, is not for me, nor Washington, destined goal of the crafty-minded. No, give me the brown shadows where wild azalea lets fall her veil above a black pool of the Queens River, as also a wholly nondescript house shut in by oak and beech and dripping in Atlantic mist."

FISHING

QUEEN'S RIVER

*These three are at my command,
 Fisherville, Hathaway, Sunderland.
 Each of them a shadowy mile
 Of innocence and beauty and guile,
 Reaches of river that we reach
 By learning what no wit can teach.
 Under the laurel overhang
 I know what song the Sirens sang,
 And there my fly may lightly drop,
 Or catch and be damned in the maple-top.
 There I may tease wild lightning out
 Of water black as the cuttle-gout.
 There, if the cross fates shatter the charm
 I may cast and cast till I break my arm.
 And there, while the darning-needles poise,
 I may melt and make no noise,
 And, moving less like man than dream,
 Myself may "stream into the stream,"
 Where waters rush, where waters rest,
 And all's unguessed.*

THIS chapter may have one merit denied its predecessors.

Unless my powers are greater than I suppose, I do not see how it can irritate anyone, however much it may bore persons not interested in the art with which it deals. Like better men before me I am disposed to defend the art, but for once I am not anxious to seek a quarrel with people who see no virtue in it. That is one of the things one learns from an art.

Fishing, particularly fly-casting for trout or salmon, has of late years come to mean for me a sort of physical extension of poetry. It is a great deal more than a pastime. It carries one into a region wider than sport. It is not a mere recreation or change in the routine mode of things. It is not something vaguely therapeutic, a connection with that nature dimly worshiped by hunters and ski-clubs. It is all these things of course but a great deal more, and it is positive, transcending the weak limits of escape. One goes to it. One does not flee to it. And it combines the virtue of sport, which is the perfecting one's-self in practice and theory, with a species of education which began to be lost when they walled the first city on the plains of Mesopotamia. As far as I am concerned it renews the circulation in atrophied parts of my nature. For it takes men back to places they ought never to have left, to abandoned and, it may be, archaic shrines in the mind, which now stand forlornly far away from the four-lane highways, on which our thought so-called goes mechanically up and down. Gardening at which, not having a green thumb, I am wont to mock with more than customary virulence, I suppose, does the same for its votaries. But secretly, in the midst of my laughter and glee, I sympathize with ladies in whose eyes I detect the insane gleam. If in their folly they prefer Pomona, whose lover wooed her disguised as an elderly woman, what might they not say of me who worship Proteus of the gleaming herds, whom Hercules had a tough time holding down?

One defense of fishing must be given up at once, in spite

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and in the teeth of Isaac Walton. It is not a meditative sport. No great thoughts come to the angler while he is angling. He is too involved in an immediate problem. A man who is thinking of something else, his business, women, poetry, properly speaking, isn't fishing. He may be preparing himself for these experiences on the principle that he who loseth his life shall find it, if he is dealing justly by the art, but not for any thought that he takes. The genuine fisherman is at grips with matters complex enough to absorb the intellectual energies of Einstein, who, I venture to guess, at the tiller of his knockabout, thinks only of filling his sail and not at all of the general theory of relativity. What fishing actually does for a man is to energize him through and through by taking him into unexploited tracts of his own nature, just as it takes him along material streams and among tangible woods. "To live with sensation rather than thought, by images rather than by words," has the effect of aerating the mind. No wonder great trout live where white water cataracts into the dark pool. No man ever came out of the New Brunswick woods without a shift in what he supposed to be his permanent slant.

Forty years, perhaps in vain, I have exposed myself to such possibilities. I began in the orthodox manner with a worm and much boredom. I was a timid little boy and so helpless that the gardener's sister, Anne the kind, always dug the worms for me. I loathed threading the wretched night-walkers on the barbed iron. And I got no particular kick out of the dorsal spines of the yellow perch, which I perceived had special meaning for me. In fact I was dubious about the occupation. But one lowering, dark, late-autumn afternoon, when the woods round Peace Dale Pond were drawn in India ink against the grisaille of a northeaster, I dropped my line into the somber water where the canal runs out at the end of the dam. The big sycamore called "Benny Rodman's Horsewhip" has seen no stranger sight

since Benny thrust the switch which sprouted into the ground a hundred and thirty years ago. My bob went under, and I heaved after the manner of small boys with small fish. But this was different. Out of the water came the head and shoulders of a large pickerel, possibly a two- or three-pounder. The bamboo cane broke under the strain, and the monster fled, no doubt to nurse a wound that among pickerel would put him in a class with Amfortas. Thor when he had drawn the head of the Midgard-snake up from the great deep to the gunwale, and Loki, "first and worst of guides," cut the line, knew no greater grief than I. The horror of that failure might have defeated me forever, but, unlike Thor, I was indemnified within a few moments by the capture of the largest yellow perch I ever saw—a thirteen-inch giant of his kind, who went quite well with Johnny-cake next morning. That storm-crowned afternoon did my business. Hitherto I had merely flirted, but now I had lost my maidenhead, and not only that, for I looked forward with pleasure and excitement to the life of degradation thus opened before me.

The whole sordid story can now be foreseen—the *splendeurs et misères*, as for instance the dreadful scene at La Hulpe in Belgium, when I casually tossed a three-quarter pound trout twenty feet up into a tree—with Armand Solvay's twelve-guinea Hardy. The creature dangled a moment and fell back into his stream. But what I do not forget is the infinite treasure of rolling r's which Armand crowded into the little room of *Sapristi*, as he beheld the ghastly act. In disgrace I was set to fish for ignoble carp. But Armand Solvay was magnanimous and a sportsman. Months later he sent word to a boy who had very likely sprung his Hardy for him, that he had caught that trout.

However, that was only a disgraceful interlude. The magnificent lake at Holderness engrossed me for many summers. What is called gin-clear water and a rocky sandy bot-

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tom are propitious to the small-mouthed black bass. It is true that I still ran a-whoring after live bait and that the high aspects of the sport were hidden or ignored. Neither to plug nor to fly will a great bass rise in Squam Lake after July first. And I contented my immature appetency with the molasses-spewing grasshopper and the loathly but more cleanly hellgramite. I think I was more than eight feet high when I walked into the hotel dining-room after taking my first two-pounder (more justly one and three-quarters). It is in fact a surprising experience. The little creature is savagely violent and ingenious, and when you play one, fantastic comparisons to express his valor and artifice automatically crowd the mind. The *salmonidae* have only got him just beaten, if at all, and one respects the heroic.

It was well before the age of outboard motors. Whatever was accomplished was by way of the white ash breeze. But I am glad I had hundreds of five-mile rows up the lake before sunrise. You pay in stench and racket for the economy of elbow grease. I am perfectly sure I had the best of it. Dramatically that phase of existence came to an end on our honeymoon, with the capture of a four-and-a-half-pounder, the largest bass taken or seen for years. He fought me to a standstill, but nevertheless was exchanged, as too much for two persons, for his weight in sugar and coffee at an adjoining camp.

Fishing was hardly feasible on an instructor's salary and a lacuna stands in the record for nearly ten years. I even thought I was cured of the vice. But once a courtesan always a courtesan. When I resigned, I found myself as eager for assignments as ever, in spite of initial discouragement. Nothing less likely to make one regard fishing as a sport than an attack on the Eel River in California in 1926 could be imagined. For ten mortal days three of us watched the great armor-clad steel-head lying in squadrons in their pools of chalcedony and jasper. Their motionless effrontery

cowed us. An average of one-sixth of a strike a day will take the edge off a zealot. And that we were compelled to endure as the reward of perpetual violent effort. My brief connection with one of the giants still humiliates me, when it returns in memory invariably associated with the recollection of other and more important incapacity. I struck him in a sort of miniature gorge of the Indus, where very likely La Branche himself would have made sad work of it, but when the leader broke, I felt that an officer and a gentleman would have taken immediate measures to have himself court-martialed and shot.

A year later the Klamath was no better, *quamvis gratisimus amnis*. I know no lordlier stream, dark under tremendous heights. The ten-pounders leaped so that they splashed me as I cast. Nothing could drown the memory of that insolence, and neither spinner, nor fly, nor even the vulgarity of a live crawfish, could move the creatures to co-operate. My heart was disquieted within me, as if the gods yet worshiped in those mountains had become my enemies. There was, however, one curious by-product of that bootless venture. The Indian woman, wife of the old engineer at whose camp we lodged, discovered *John Brown's Body* on my bureau, while she was making the beds. She borrowed it, and though she could barely read, was charmed by the poem, as any intelligent person naturally would be. Stephen Benét had every right to be pleased when I told him that a really American reader had liked his book. How few contemporary poets have been able to reach at once the modern man who thinks he's complex and the savage who certainly is!

Unhouselled, disappointed, unannealed, Chauncey Goodrich and I fled from those mysterious and unprofitable gorges into Oregon where we were made free of the Paradise of the Mackenzie. There at length I grew acquainted with the dry fly. I am not likely to forget the strange, sliding,

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onyxine floors of river, on which my line at length achieved a reasonably decent distance, accuracy, and float, nor the unexampled shock when a fair-sized rainbow came out of water and down on the "blue upright." Also I struck my first salmon with shameful results that restored to me my original sense of inferiority, which had waned because of a day or two of triumph. Milo the guide's bitter comment was: "Now I don't care if you never hit anything more in the river." I knew I deserved it. But the fact is he grieved for me in his heart.

A day or two after that disaster, the rainbow absolutely ceased from troubling, after the manner of rainbow. No fly that ever was tied could charm them; was it cast never so wisely. Milo produced a rod of his own with a spinner, and I laid my own good weapon down with a feeling that a white slaver was a Christian gentleman compared with me. "It's all right," he said, "Dolly Varden won't touch a fly, but you'll have fun." He held the boat above an eddy and I let the line out into the whirl. The effects were literally shocking. Fifteen minutes later we landed one of the great carnivorous chars, after a battle that left me trembling. It was like being in a fight with a desperate and ingenious man. We got another not quite so large and called it a day. My cup was full. It was our last crack at the Mackenzie, and I for one was satisfied. "What do you think of that outfit?" I asked Milo, as I picked up the fly-rod on which the giants had not been taken. "It's a peach," he said. "Well, Milo, it's yours." His answer, accepting the gift, has always pleased me for its appreciative delicacy: "I didn't expect that."

To Milo, beyond his other benefits toward me, I owed what seems to me a vivid picture of conditions of life I have not myself seen. We had gone ashore for lunch, and I asked him idly whether he took any interest in boxing, a subject which at the moment commanded the attention of ninety million Americans. "No," he said meditatively, "come to

think of it, I did some once. Feller here in town, good friend of mine now. I got his girl away from him. And that was all right, but I talked out of turn. He could outbox me, but I could outwrestle him. You oughter seen my face. Had a beefsteak on it a week. At the end of the fight, I got under his guard and threw him. I got on top of him and got me a rock about as big as my fist. And then you know *they have to be good.*"

That glimpse of local methods of settling difficulties, without reference to the picayune principles of the Marquis of Queensberry, had some queer value in my sight. It is better to know what men really are. Privately I determined to have no immedicable differences with Milo, a delightful example of the delightful race of guides.

It's a long way from the tributaries of the Willamette to the Miramichi. The New Brunswick river is to the Mackenzie as the Amazon to the Hudson. It is wider and deeper with a more headlong and fatal power in its brown channel. The pole and the paddle are still the symbols and instruments of triumph. Roads are few, far between, and reasonably bad in a province as large as New England, with a population smaller than Rhode Island's. The rivers dominate everything. They are Life and not infrequently Death, and they are very often the ultimate extreme in sport.

To Howard, where a train stops thrice a week and where, nevertheless, the station agent managed to collide with it in his Ford, I came conducted by an experienced cousin, Pierre Hazard, who brought me to battle in a mile-long pool with the salmon of the Atlantic. It is already cold in those latitudes in September. But the sweet wild country at the mouth of the Cains, with its pine, birch, and maple was beautiful and wet under the chill, dark, autumn cloud. When the first grilse struck I supposed life held no more. I haven't a doubt that the desperate thing was five feet above the pallid waters, not once but many times. The great arching leaps all round

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the canoe made one's innards pole-vault. And the creature's furious energy will never be described. Quenching such a savage fire trieth the heart and reins. I could not believe that it could be surpassed. But I was to unlearn that error swiftly.

To employ the classic figure, I have never shot a tiger or harpooned a whale. I don't know what it means to wait for the charging elephant, before giving him the second barrel. But despite my inexperience, I venture to think that nothing in the strange category of sport can exceed the shock of your first salmon's strike. It is like the unsealing of seals and the blowing of trumpets. It is death and damnation and hell and confusion. It is like holding a runaway nightmare with a pack-thread. The hopeless feeling when he leaps and crashes four hundred feet away, the exultation when he follows it in and you reel desperately, only to find that he came merely from policy or curiosity, are parts of a real drama. Time is divided into particles, each particle containing a shot at a tiger, generally a miss. And this succession of violent shocks may continue for hours, during which your conscious life, if it be conscious, is altered in kind and in degree. Railway folders and anglers, who should know better, always throw in the "scream of the reel" somewhere in the dithyramb, but there is a stranger sound which I do not remember to have seen mentioned, the low, soft, menacing hum that comes out of vibrating split-bamboo subjected to the last tension it can stand.

The first fish I struck was a ten- or twelve-pounder. I fought him dead during forty-five minutes of fury that would have sufficed to take a warship by boarding. He turned on his back in the roiled water. Harry Boyce, the perfect guide, stood poised and alert with the net. I was a yard or two above him on the greasy, red, trampled bank, shivering, soaked to the skin, with both arms numb, yet with enough sensation in them to feel as if they had been broken

off at the elbows. With extreme caution and the minimum of tension, I drew the prize toward the net. Nearer, nearer, two feet, a foot, six inches—when naturally the hook pulled out of the worn cartilage of the upper jaw. The English equivalent of the *mot de Cambronne* is as useless as it is ugly, and as usual did nothing to help matters.

Next day I landed not one but two of approximately fourteen pounds apiece, feeling as if a secular curse had been lifted, and that the gods of the wilderness were placated at last. For every man in the world it is essential that at some time they should be placated. More human grief is due to the failure to attend to this than the wise always admit or the clever ever imagine. The experienced Pierre Hazard had fared ill during my initial defeat and double victory. He was to have the noblest of revenges. The sixteen-pounder that struck at five in the afternoon, and was landed by lantern-light at seven minutes before eight, after going into the backing fourteen times, was as imperial a creature as ever bent rod and certainly indemnified him richly for his private agonies. It was a sow-salmon, and the last moments of the struggle looked like the murder-scene in a Gordon Craig version of *The Duchess of Malfi*. On a rock where a bogan swirled stood Pierre, "there like a Roman statue," for a stricken hour. The wet arc of the rod gleaming like permanent lightning against his breast, the assassin look of the guide peering at the troubled stream when she came in for the last time, the uprush of the net as it whipped out of the water with its burden of silver—it was macabre and superb.

Cover the face. Mine eyes dazzle. She died young.

Between Pierre and myself since that tremendous three hours a secular contest rages. On mere number, taken over a period of years, he is well up, as he deserves to be by virtue of more artistic and less eccentric casting. But it was I who

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killed the giant, twenty-one and a half pounds, snatched from the jaws of a log-drive in a bight of the beautiful Cains. Even Ruskin once admitted that size does count.

If European dictators could be induced to run the Cains River in the spring, Spanish cities would not be bombed for sport. The idea is very old, but not falser for that reason. To sleep on beds of arbutus fifteen feet across, to wake at three in the morning and see even the southern sky pulsing scarlet with the Aurora, to feast on salmon-chowder and like delicacies which wood or river permit, to watch the bull-moose with his mastodon look swank into the vapor-breathing river for his morning drink, and to hear sweet voices calling on an unknown God named "Old Sam Peabody," these things please me greatly. And if by good fortune—against such a background—one becomes attached to a spirited fish, certain aspects of the mind are developed and intensified into not undesirable change. But it is noticeable that no dictator has ever been a sportsman. If he had been, he would not be a dictator, for the adequate reason that he was born a professional, particularly when it comes to "blood-sports." It is a curious fact, pointed out to me by a manufacturer of fishing-lines, that practically no convinced fishermen are in prison. Professional criminals hunt, but never fish. No doubt these remarks are so trivial that they approach the edge of the meaningless. Nevertheless, my small pleasures have meant enough to me to make me wish they meant more to others. One can be warped out of human semblance by what one considers important, and restored to modest normality by what many judge to be of no significance. I have what I consider a life-purpose. I am not a bit troubled by the fact that at times I have put it by in favor of what no man is apt to regard as a definite object. However ill I may achieve my desire, what I do will be no worse, because I once stood up to my thighs in a Wyoming river, while a rainbow on my line leaped against three pale blue

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peaks of the Sawtooth Range. Guilty of many things as I have been, of erroneous thought, of imperfect feeling, of pretentiousness and the ignorance which begat it, of sentimentality and injustice, I am disposed to agree with a better man who said that evil never came to anyone because of a brown hackle dropped with reasonable competence on running water.

I have summed the whole business up in a short poem, on which no doubt those who write prolegomena to any future poetry, who misquote Verlaine quite as they misconstrue him, and who carry on their café-vendettas apart from nature as from art, will come down with the crushing weight of their contempt. I cannot help it if they do, and shan't mind much. Here is the poem in all its naked deformity.

SALMON FISHING

*My hand will have lost its cunning
And be dust or ash.
But the salmon will be running
And the moose will smash
Through the young birches for the old reason
In rutting season.*

*And on the river there will be a stranger,
Down the brown eddy
Flicking the "Jock Scott" or the "Durham Ranger,"
Who will feel the heady
Unreasonable passion, lightning-like,
At the strike.*

*And my frail will imperious,
Long overpast,
Will not concern him, where, alert and serious,
He leans to cast
"George Allen's Fancy," or "Cains River Streamer,"
Bright undefeated Dreamer!*

DEFENSE OF POETRY

With Some Mention of Poets

NEW WORDS TO OLD MUSIC

*This world stands under an evil star,
And I read the litany of Dunbar,
And the term of beauty and poetry.
Timor mortis conturbat me.*

*That befell him, which must befall,
The splendid Mistral, flower of them all
That in our times have chanted free.
Timor mortis conturbat me.*

*There was Francis Thompson grieving and praying,
That hearkened the hound of Heaven baying.
Yet he suffered and vanished, as needs must be.
Timor mortis conturbat me.*

*What secret terror could maim and stun
The valiant soul of John Davidson,
When the runnable stag must sink in the sea?
Timor mortis conturbat me.*

*Hellas and Troyland quaked and shook
When the mort was blowing for Rupert Brooke*

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And an end to courage and courtesy.

Timor mortis conturbat me.

And Elinor Wylie's body broken

Ere the last of the noble utterance was spoken,

That was too lovely ever to be.

Timor mortis conturbat me.

How came the lightning and hurricane

To havoc the spirit of poor Hart Crane?

Go ask of the cobalt Carib sea.

Timor mortis conturbat me.

They wrote their hearts out royal and red.

They sang their morning song. Now they are dead.

And we prattle of immortality!

Timor mortis conturbat me.

As HAS been said before poetry needs no defense. But after a delicious afternoon between laurel and flag-flower on a stream where the dry fly worked all its charm, I came into my study and found myself writing one. That is to say I found myself setting down random sentences about what I have lived for, and about certain men and women, who, whatever their differences of interest and approach, have lived for the same thing. Those random thoughts, amplified and I hope more closely knit, make up this final chapter.

Poetry, as must be the case with whatever really engrosses, has been my blessing and my curse. When I was wholly unaware, it made my pleasure just as it made my grief. It is forty years since the first verse came haltingly from the end of my pencil. It is nearly thirty since my first book was printed. In those three decades I have published rather more than two thousand pages of verse, light, heavy, tragical, comical, historical, pastoral, scene undividable, or poem unlimited. With luck I shall publish two thousand more—to some I could name a black prospect. In the course of my labors

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I have known every aspect of hope and despair, the former during brief and widely separated intervals, the latter like an exorbitant and jealous mistress. I am familiar with unknown ecstasies and singular varieties of pain. Passions high and low go hand in hand with the practice of the art. And I have been flushed with generous admiration which became me, and have burnt with squalid envy which did not. Possibly because of some increase in wisdom, but more probably because of a mere automatic better adjustment, I have to some extent outgrown the latter, though I fear I am apt to overvalue such small triumphs as I have known, and am still capable of running down those I have not.

Naturally, a man thinks about his life-interest a good deal, often to very little purpose, and though I claim no authority on the subject beyond my neighbor's, I have some views which I do not fear to state. In the first place I think poetry is a matter of the very first importance to all mankind, as important as science and religion, with both of which it has affinities. That many people, and by no means stupid ones, do not think so, is one of my reasons for believing that it is essential to have faith in the attempt to create poetry. When so influential a writer as Spengler lets loose the notion that a man in these times ought to turn from the contemptible manufacture of sonnets and devote his attention to the improvement of internal combustion motors, he is a blessed fellow. His mind keeps to the highroad as well as any man's. I hold no particular brief for sonnets or any other ancient form. But if he means that poetry has perished, I shall be interested to know what pleasure a man is apt to derive from the strange countries into which his new motor will ferry him. The question has been asked before. Technology, doubtless, may improve itself forever, though it too has its shadow, but if the leisure which technology increases does not find bright pleasures, it will find dull ones, which would be too bad. Furthermore, it would set a limit on any future

advance. If the beauty of language and the interconnection between such heights and deeps as there are in man, cease to be honored and recognized, why not return to the gorilla and be done with it? After all the gorilla is not intellectually much inferior to, and has more natural grace than, quite a number of my acquaintance.

To many people nowadays, poetry seems an archaic and artificial form of expression. It is felt that language and thought must suffer when subjected to modes so strict and arbitrary. It is not realized how infinitely language and thought gain, when, though subjected to such modes, they transcend them. The poets have in part themselves to thank for the present attitude. In the first place, of course, they have written a great deal of poor stuff in the old forms. And language which is merely metrical is horrible. In the second, they have written still worse stuff in the new formlessness. Out of the deliquescence of expression catalyzed by the genius of Whitman (no innuendo is intended) very little that is bound to be remembered has issued. Form is absolutely necessary to poetry. And merely to have a yen for self-expression is meaningless in the connection unless it be allied with the succinct and the compact.

Christ! What are patterns for?

Ryder once observed to me that a strict form was like the rails which keep a train that is going somewhere, on the track. Naturally there must be some development of B. T. U.s in the locomotive. And, of course, the track is no good if there is no train. There was a mighty outcry against all fixed form whatever twenty years ago—a somewhat natural reaction against the farded elegance of the nineties. But it is curious to watch the principal protagonists drift back to the fold, to see Alfred Kreyborg composing sonnets that wouldn't have astonished Alfred Tennyson, and to see John Gould Fletcher writing lyrics in which Longfellow

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would have perceived no novelty. These things have happened. And they had to, for in the long run sensible men have got to accept what is archetypal. And if there is anything archetypal in us at all, it is the disposition toward measured rhythm. As I have said elsewhere, it is as much a part of us as the disposition to eat meat is part of a tiger. The primitive rhythm in any night-club may be crude, but it is inescapable. And the highest things cannot be expressed at all except in rhythms more refined but cognate. The minute that emotion, high or low, enters the picture, rhythm (and I mean the especial rhythm of verse as contrasted with the endless tunk-a-tunk of prose) is bound to be there. Faust once made the point that there is no great tragedy except in verse. And in spite of Tchekhoff and Ibsen, the point seems to me well taken. Incidentally, why did Ibsen write *Peer Gynt* in verse?

One point that it seems to me worth while making is this. Like all things human, poetry has a body and a soul. I don't like those words, especially the second because of its odor of unnecessary and second-rate sanctity. But I have to use them, because they are shorter than the phrases I might conjure up in their places. By the body I, of course, mean the actual words uttered in speech or printed on paper. By the soul I mean, not so much the idea or notion, that a poem may or may not convey, as the spirit that informs the words, a hard thing to describe, but something which is felt at once by whoever is sensitive to such radiations. Now with respect to a human, living creature it has been quite generally asserted, if not believed, that body and soul are of about equal importance (such dubious questions as the greater permanence of the less tangible entity being left out of consideration). A celebrated philosopher, by many believed to be an expert on the subject, implies somewhere that if you pay too much attention to the soul you run in some danger of losing it altogether. In spite of which his followers have

often, in the teeth of their teacher's example at a famous wedding when he arranged for extra wine, encouraged among the more feeble-minded brethren a perfectly absurd neglect of the body. And such ideas are what keep laboring the point, that body and soul are necessary to each other, from being wholly absurd. They connect, they interact, and this connection and interaction is as true of poetry as it is of the living man, of whom poetry should be a special reflection in light from a not quite usual tract of the spectrum.

This banal analogy, which I cannot prevent the reader from undervaluing if he likes, seems to me to lead to certain inferences, as, for instance, that at the moment we are suffering from overemphasis of each of the opposed tendencies. Men can be found without difficulty, who will go off the deep end about the spirit of liberation of, say, Rimbaud, who proclaimed and exacted every form of freedom. Those persons seldom notice that Rimbaud's best poems without exception obey metrical laws whose rigidity would have horrified Longfellow. I'm not adducing this as a reason for obeying metrical laws, many of which are, or have become, silly, as the motives, which at one time made them obligatory, grow less compulsive or disappear altogether.

Historically English poetry is a mixed affair. Teutonic rhythms, governed by Latin traditions, and subjected to Arabic patterns,* make up a sufficiently complex compound. If the body, as opposed to the soul, is to live and grow, new and to us strange varieties of rhythm are bound to appear. But nothing is without its reason. And before what has been is read out of court, what is definitely to be must make its footing good. I happen to believe that much of what looks arbitrary and irrational, rhyme for instance, is often as rooted in our natures as anything whatever that is rooted

* This statement has only recently come to be believed. But I think that no argument will stand against the thesis that the Moor at Cordova gave to the Troubadour at Toulouse the varied stanzas that appear in all the modern European tongues.

there. This in the teeth of Milton's preface to *Paradise Lost*. No one has suffered more in this connection than I, who have actually endured agonies, wondering whether it was lawful to submit to "the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming," or whether the poet should eschew it altogether. To the layman the whole question may seem ridiculous, but if you are as close to it as one whose highest hope is to write poetry, the problem becomes a bitter moral enigma. It seems to me that rhyme justifies itself on strange irrational grounds, just as meter does. But it is clear that when I fell into that slough of bewilderment, I had forgotten my thesis and was too preoccupied about the body of poetry. In the same way one may grow too preoccupied by the soul, and, aware of some informing spirit, not take sufficient thought as to how it may shine forth.

To make some sort of a summary, good poets endeavor to play fair with both soul and body, and frequently succeed and frequently fail, which explains why there are magnificent places in Pope just as there are horrible ones in Keats, both of whom, antipathetic as the first was to the second, are particular gods of my particular idolatry. And this leads me to another general point, on which I have some right to speak, as one who has read practically the whole body of English poetry and a great deal in other languages. Of what is called poetry, and by that I mean poetry that will not willingly be allowed to die, an enormous part is in a sense tosh, necessary tosh, but tosh. It is a tall poet indeed, one-tenth of whose song is at his height. Milton, whose intended wing did not sweep so high as two or three of his great predecessors, is perhaps the one man in a thousand years of English verse, of whom it can be said that once on his way he scarcely ever wandered into the plains of bathos and ineptitude. Of none of his successors could such a statement be made. Who does not know the *longueurs* of Shelley, what can only be called the horrors of Wordsworth, or the

sick lapses of which Keats was only too often guilty? There is a sort of terror in the fact that properly to enjoy the oases, you must wander in the deserts of "The Faërie Queene." Too often the reader must recognize that the medium has defeated the artist, and forgive him where he staggers under his convention or, what is quite as bad, the lack of it. For only if the reader is willing to take the rough with the smooth, will he be rewarded by a vision of the pentecostal descent of the divine fire. Our slow but instructed fathers understood this. And as they mulled over the verses of the Victorians, often quite as bad as anything achieved nowadays, permitted themselves to be engaged by the high spots, often better than much of our contemporary performance. But our quick illiterate moderns have not got the idea that in an art so difficult it is not even permitted to genius invariably to hit the nail. In fact they argue that genius hits the nail every time, quite oblivious that Horace noticed Homer's tendency to doze. This in a measure explains why the zealot contends that every line of Ezra Pound's is instinct with perpetual fire, and not a syllable of Auden's but is the Platonic ideal of wit. If Auden were Shakespeare you couldn't say that about him, any more than you could say it of Shakespeare, who, if there be a heaven, is probably telling Joan of Arc how much he regrets the tripe he wrote about her in *Henry the Sixth*. Where everything has some novel meretricious glitter, Cowley's forgotten couplet becomes apposite.

*Men doubt, because they stand so thick i' the sky,
If those be stars which paint the Galaxie.*

I recently amused myself by designing a hell for persons devoted to the type of criticism which I have dealt with in the preceding sentences. It will be equipped with every latest gadget except loud-speakers and radios. No expense will be spared and many simple amusements will be provided. But

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the only books available will be those in the Library of Heaven, which may be obtained at any time by filling out a card. This I believe is the meanest idea that ever occurred to a mind not incapable of cruelty. Where in the *Inferno* is there anything more appalling than condemning a critical hack to the eternal contemplation of *Paradise Lost*?

Heretofore this chapter has dealt with generalities. I am now going to take up more particular matters. If, as I believe, it is a sort of law that in the great poets there is often much chaff for little wheat, how much more must it apply to me? If there are forty among my forty thousand published lines that approximate the hope I had of every one of them, I shall be well satisfied. I may add that not one of the forty I should pick myself appear in the half page devoted to my performance in the new edition of Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations*, though it is fair to admit that there is nothing Sinaitic about an author's estimate of his own work. "Come, I'll read you 'Maud.' You'll never forget it," said Tennyson to Henry Van Dyke, Henry Van Dyke being of all men the man least likely to forget "Maud." No compliment is intended, but the anecdote admirably illustrates the fact that a man may not know his best work. The gods, with indecent humor, permitted the laureate to believe himself a psychologist. I wonder what they have fooled me into believing. Some people would say into believing that I was a poet. But my house, such as it is, is, in my own sight after forty years of labor, founded on one page in a wholly ignored book, a couple of songs, and an epitaph. And the blurbs say I am a satirist. Clearly I am.

Which by an easy transition leads to what the blurbs say, in a word, to criticism, in the daily and weekly press. On the whole I have been gently used. Now and then I have been panned, and nobody likes that. But as a general rule I have had a tolerably good press. It is true I have been called a pedant and a snob. And it is also true that, though I hate

Hitler as well as the best of them, I have been a special target of those racists who dwell on a mountain called "Kike's Pique." It is true that I have been told to go to school to T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, both of whom by taking unprofitable thought have subtracted more than a cubit from their natural stature. But on the other hand I have been immensely complimented. What bites me about the critics is not their cruelty but their incompetence. For example only one out of dozens perceived that *The Legend of Quincibald* was written in a measure as new (I will not say as beautiful) as Minerva when she issued from Jove's brain-case. *The Voyage of Autoleon* written in a similar meter was compared, with respect to verse structure, to "Locksley Hall" by a friendly reviewer. It is true that my line is long and so is Tennyson's. But the *Autoleon* line is paeonic with five stresses and the "Locksley Hall" measure is trochaic with eight. The verses resemble each other as a pick-axe resembles a broad-axe. Of course, prosody is the mere cut-and-dried anatomy of the tangible body of verse. But if they don't even understand that, there will be wild work when they presume to prescribe for the soul. And there is.

A most favorable review of Naomi Mitchison's *Cloud Cuckoo-Land* in the virtuous but self-important *New Republic* may stand for a summary and symbol of the whole silly business. The reviewer praised it to the skies. No one had captured the spirit of Athens during the Peloponnesian War so well as Mrs. Mitchison, which, judging by her briefer stories, was probably true. The only thing the critic found to cavil at was what he chose to call "the absurd and meaningless title." In that forcing-house of culture a man who had never heard of the *Birds* of Aristophanes was not ashamed to gas about "the Greek Spirit." And the hell of it is that every writer whatever, good or bad, encounters just that sort of critical imbecility every time he brings out a

book. In England they now have the same animal, witness the critic in the *Times* who thought Ogden Nash had a good deal of humor, but that he was careless about his rhymes. In short, I have come to the sensible conclusion of Christopher Morley, whose rule is never to read a review. They don't help. They don't hinder. Their venom is innocuous and their praise is just as unimportant. And the public, whom they pretend to lead, pays hardly more attention to them than authors should.

It is a favorite sport of not too famous or successful men of letters to run down the public mind. One suspects such testimony. If a thing is good it will ultimately make its way. If not, it ought not to have ultimate success. Though I have been resentful and sorrowful when too obviously ignored, I am not going to lay myself open to the sort of retort Voltaire made to Jean Baptiste Rousseau. Rousseau, who was a minor poet and not to be confused with Jean Jaques, was bitter against the public and told Voltaire that he was writing a letter to Posterity. "Ah," said Voltaire, "that letter will never reach its address." And bang went another beautiful friendship. My public is a very small one and, I hope, intensely intelligent, though that I cannot prove. I count my readers in fewer hundreds, than many of my friends, including poets, count thousands. At the outside I may have ten thousand readers of whom between five hundred and a thousand go to the extraordinary length of purchasing my volumes as they appear. A good many strangers write me from time to time, but you would hardly call it a fan-mail. The letters are often pleasant enough to make me arch my back and purr. However, I have it in for those subhuman things who enclose a three-cent stamp with a request for a holograph copy of a poem in one's own fist. Certain persons I believe collect my "firsts." If those bibliophiles were to go after my second editions, they would discover that they are

rarities, beside which the Gutenberg Bible looks like *Gone with the Wind*.

Long ago I saw there was no money in it for me as for others. And I'm not a bit sorry for either. It is a good thing. This art ought to be outside the market-place. Ryder told me so long ago, but I think I always knew it. One wishes to please. And if a man does, and obtains a great material reward, why that is perfectly swell, and legitimate like a Nobel prize. But the poet never was born that could get it up to sell, in spite of the story of Firdausí and the sixty thousand gold-pieces. The French have made the only suitable arrangement with respect to poets. Somehow they manage small bureaucratic jobs for them. Bourdet's joke about the man-of-letters, who after a huge success went back to his desk in the Ministry of Posts, because that was the only place where he could write undisturbed, has more than mirth in it. Theodore Roosevelt made a beginning when he gave E. A. Robinson a position in the Customs, with very little to do and enough to live on. What man of genius could ask for more? And in my opinion it would be worth any country's while, indirectly to encourage what cannot be encouraged directly. And God knows no men need encouragement more.

Poetry is the loneliest form of creation, for it is communication almost in secret with one other at a time. Archie MacLeish and Vachel Lindsay are, of course, right in their contention that poetry ought to be declaimed to mobs in market-places, but it will always have its secret moment, when it is spoken by an immaterial voice in the mind, as it can never be uttered aloud. The painting and the statue are viewed by herds that exchange emotions with each other. But only the mad King of Bavaria heard music, as most people who love poetry hear poetry alone. And the attempt to satisfy yourself and at the same time make what will set up a vibration elsewhere is the most heart-breaking thing in

the world. Thirty years ago a writer of parts reincarnated Keats at the moment of the creation of "The Eve of St. Agnes." That fallacious but convincing picture remains as far as I know the best description of how a poem comes on paper. And Kipling knew what he was talking about, certainly in this instance. The symbol rises unheralded in the mind, as a fish rises to make a strange circle on the surface of motionless water. It had been there all the time, but whatever it is that thinks it thinks was not aware of this. Suddenly the mind is full of crystalline linkings. Unexampled relations are clear. The lines swirl up. They make themselves. All day you labor and finally lie down with a feeling of triumph. Next morning you wonder what it was that you thought was so excellent in one more failure. Too often you have an uneasy sense that this is mere echo and tear it out and throw it away. Too often you don't. And once in three or four years you may feel about five or six lines that opinion is not very important, because those five or six lines are the top of what is permitted you to perform. I could count on my fingers the moments when I passed a gentle judgment on my own labor. That is a sufficient compensation.

One incalculable reward poetry has brought me. It has put me in close and often affectionate relation with other lost adventurers, my peers or my betters. To that splendid and burning interest I owe many a charming encounter and many an unsullied friendship.

Twenty-eight years ago that interest swept me into the delightful orbit of William Rose Benét, which already included Stephen his brother and Laura his sister and was to draw in the beautiful and mysterious elegance of Elinor Wylie. We were friends from that moment, often opposed in opinion, but never in feeling. And we have been together in the hard hour and the easy. Benét with his face of a medieval humorist, his quick, informed, and diverting mind,

is one of the best men as well as one of the best poets of the times, as anyone who has read "The Falconer of God" and "Perpetual Light" can tell at a glance. And my curse on the illiterate boneheads, who with banal imbecility bring against him the charge, fatal in their sight, that he is well read, as if the reading of great books were not a great human experience. Certainly it never hurt a poet yet. I should like to know where *Kubla Khan* and *The Ancient Mariner* would be without Marco Polo, Bartram's Travels, and Shelvocke's Voyages. "Le Bateau Ivre" is no doubt the result of Rimbaud's study of the garbage pails of Charleville, and the child's remarkable vocabulary is clearly also the racy idiom of the gutter. If Benét is bookish then he is in damned good company. A great book is just as real to a man of cultivation as a lavatory in a brothel is to the new kind of critic. And though it be merciless to labor the point, it is well to mention a sonnet called "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," on the whole a pretty good one. Keats had not "lived" one single image in his poem. Was he by when Herschel looked on Uranus? Had he stood with the explorer on the ridge of Panama? Yet he managed pretty well, in spite of half-baked school-teachers writing on the gynecology of the nine muses.*

Stephen Benét I have known nearly as long, but not so continuously and well. If ever the fire came down, it came down on him. In my sight he has his moments of being definitely unequal to himself. I wish he had kept *John Brown* on his desk ten years instead of three. But how beautiful the great parts are, the invocation, the ending, the episode of Mellora Vilas, the girl who turned into a frontier song. And what "a pleasurable American idiom" he has forged for his purpose! Daniel Boone will go by at night forever in this country, and Stephen Benét in my opinion is

* "Ung, hath he slept with the aurochs? Watched where the mastodon roam?"

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going to be remembered as long as phantom deer arise in forests which will never glut sawmills.

Elinor Wylie I only met occasionally. But she visited us in Peace Dale with Bill, and I had long talks with her in the study where I am writing this sentence. The various adjectives in common use to describe complex personalities are peculiarly valueless with respect to her. Beautiful extremely in person, with an intellect as sharp and straight as a sword, she was an extraordinary mixture of the resolute and the helpless, of the instructed and the naive. You never knew whether she was going to be dove or peacock. But she was charming either way, in her humility or in her arrogance. A lot has been written about her, all of it, it would seem, by persons who possessed the very heart of her mystery. I can only guess at the motives of as enigmatic a nature as I ever encountered. But this I may interject, that every essay I have seen about her made me retch, as I considered my own slight knowledge of her. She seemed to me a woman given up to poetry as Sappho was given up to it, literally possessed by a god as Cassandra was possessed.

Oto-toto-toi Opollon hemos!

It was as if there lived in her the spirit of a man whom she called Shelley, not a whit like the actual Shelley, but a sort of demon-child-lover. Her preoccupation was observed by certain of her more commonplace acquaintances, who drew material inferences, after their manner, with a good deal of imbecility and more impudence. It is my considered opinion that she was in love with the masculine part of her own nature. For a woman less gifted this would have been a misfortune, and a long step on the road to madness. But for her it was natural and fitting, because that was where the poetry lived. She once recited the sonnets that deal with the demon-child-lover to me, one of the very few times I've ever heard a poet recite really effectively. My intuition has often mis-

led me, but if those poems are about an actual flesh-and-blood person who lives in a house somewhere, then Spenser's "Foure Hymnes to the Divine Beautie" are about a vulgar amour in a dive in Whitechapel. The immaterial power that dominated her and transformed her from a Washington debutante into one of the first poets of her time, was altogether different from, and wholly above, the speculations in which our rather sticky critics are too apt to indulge.

Incidentally I have a really beautiful picture of her in my mind. When she visited us in Peace Dale, the gods, as if by design, put on the finest show that lies in their power. We had such an ice-storm as I have never seen before or since. Every twig in our woods had a sheath of silver. And that night it turned fine and clear. The four of us walked out to see the strange gleaming night. The darkness and the whiteness constructed a world that seemed especially made for her, and I fancied a resemblance between the silvery and rigid trees and her sharp and brilliant poetry. It seemed to me that the analogy was more real than a mere fancy.

One quaint weakness Elinor Wylie had, beyond even the irritable race of poets. She frothed at the mouth at any comment not wholly approving. In what still seems to me an enthusiastic review of "In Black Armour," I had made one slight stricture. Some of the poems seemed to me needlessly obscure, because of images so individual as to be incomprehensible, and to make my point, I quoted a line from the book:

"My hand preserves a shape too utterly its own."

When I met her first shortly after the appearance of this notice, she was silent for the space of half an hour. I was embarrassed and conscious of being examined by one who knew how. Suddenly and unexpectedly she spoke with great good humor: "I think we are going to get on. I was afraid I should hate you on account of that dreadful review." Later

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in the evening after I had praised some verses she recited, she turned on me with a leopardess look, almost screaming: "Now will you take it back?" It is something to have known, even so slightly, one who, many years in her grave, still seems stubborn to outstare the sky.

In California, Sinclair Lewis, then on the verge of triumph, brought me acquainted with the singular and talented George Sterling, who had the profile of Dante, great powers, and no luck at all. I never understood why he could never bring it off. He may have lacked the humor essential to poets, particularly when their singing-ropes are on. And I must confess that much of what impressed me then looks sadly pontifical now. Certainly Ambrose Bierce's ill-considered ballyhoo did nothing whatever to encourage in Sterling a disposition not to take himself too seriously. His gleaming virtuosity was expended on subjects which proved insufficient. And he became a sort of Paganini, developing commonplace themes with bursts of violinistic fireworks. Yet as a man he was simple and direct. And some of his shorter poems are well outside the condemnation suggested above. Also he was immensely catholic and generous in his mind. The pupil of Father Tabb was naturally an admirer of the Great Tradition, but that did not prevent him from being one of the first poets to recognize and proclaim the immense uneven powers of Robinson Jeffers. It is hateful to think of the gifted and powerful creature riding into an empty desert where he encountered only mirage, physical suffering, spiritual starvation, and death by his own hand. But I should hesitate to set him below men who have not so early had the poppy of oblivion scattered over them.

If I speak of Vachel Lindsay, it is not because I knew him, but because I heard him, and he meant to be heard. Furthermore anyone who ever heard him ought to set down a record of the strange impression he produced. On the whole I think that Lindsay was one of those unfortunates who have tre-

mendous vitality and personal force coupled with only moderate talent. He had a poem in him somewhere all right, and he was a splendid creature. But he deceived himself and others with his own exuberance. When he declaimed his verses, there was no art known to the actor that he did not command. His voice was a roar, a whisper, a hiss, a shriek. There never had been anything like it, since the rhapsodists foamed at the mouth, as they shouted Homer across the open sewers in the Athens of Pericles. Lindsay emphasized the rhythm till your teeth chattered, or dwelt on a vowel long enough to grow a crop on it. He mouthed, he ranted, he tore genuine but by no means novel passions to tatters. "Legree of the Red River" was I think commonplace enough in print, but it was another guess matter when he chanted it with noises like the baying of hounds and the cracking of bull-whips. And when he launched into his remarkable African fantasy, then I personally saw the Congo. In spite of descents to absolutely ridiculous depths of bathos, I do not remember having been carried to wilder heights by any *diseur*. It would be good if better poets had known so instinctively that poetry should be heard as well as seen. I don't think he was merely the *diseur* either. The stately Doric verses "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight" to me appear to show symptoms of permanence. But the man who reads them a century hence will not from them form the faintest notion of the wild, inhibited, and untrammelled creature out of whose mind and heart they proceeded.

It was in 1927 that I first encountered that remarkable amalgam of non-conformist school-master and Tyrtæus, Sir Henry Newbolt. The young English intellectuals were already sneering at his idealized battle-pieces. No doubt there is something wrong about sitting in a study and working up an emotion about episodes on the Baluchi Frontier. It is the thing that's wrong about *The Lays of Ancient Rome* and about Stevenson's famous question "Shall we never draw

blood?" which last makes a man bow his head for shame. But people who take a high line with persons guilty of such errors, should remember the remark that most cynicism is only sentimentality inside out. And I don't think it is any worse to have written "Drake's Drum," which is spirited and genuine, than it is to talk with authority about Dante when your knowledge is limited to what is contained in one essay by T. S. Eliot. Sir Henry's talk was what charmed me about him, and a luncheon followed by a heavenly afternoon of conversation with him and the equally delightful John Bailey at the Athenaeum is one of the things that cannot be taken from me. However limited the range of his own instrument, he was a lover of the whole art, and as cordial to the new as he was reverent before the old. Though he were fifty times a school-master, he had not a trace of that hateful pedantry which sees in anything novel and full of life some threat to established dignity. There is no more catholic anthology than his. And he could be cordial to T. Sturge Moore, and Flecker, to Edith Sitwell and Eliot.

Eliot I have only encountered once at a reading he gave of his own poetry—in Providence. His chased and chiseled silver-work fascinates and charms me. And *Murder in the Cathedral* is work of power. At least five of his brief poems are enough for any man to have written. To predict is to deliver one's-self bound, but I shall have lost a bet if those five do not carry him into noble company. But the ideas to which he is now delivered, the *Weltanschauung* to which he has slowly drifted, drive me insane. With limitless abilities and a tactile sense of the fine line at least the equal of any man living, he confines himself within an area of stale interest. I compare him in fantasy to a great fish, a splendid salmon, who has got himself into a rock-pool otherwise inhabited by decadent ecclesiastical crabs, parasitic hagfish, and literary urchins. A creature of great oceans and made to force his way up cataracts in unknown rivers, he describes

from time to time an impressive lyric curve about the still pool, only to fall back into the stagnancies of—Anglo-Catholicism, which long since ceased to feel the lunar motion of living tides.

Moreover, I have lost every shred of sympathy I may have had for a Lost Generation as it wandered in the Waste Land. I belong to that generation myself, and it has only got a mild dyspepsia due to habitual overindulgence. I am so sick of that self-pity (much like Tennyson's least agreeable moments) I could burst with real pessimism. Beyond that the land need not be waste and wouldn't be, if it were not for idle wringing of irresolute hands. The enemy of God is not the imbecile cult of atheism but the feeble cult of preciosity, which flourishes best in Chelsea. There never was a time when fire and music could not remold a universe no matter how shattered. And to behave as if the world had gone to hell, when a French scientist can find a prohibited new element in a rock any morning, is what I cannot imagine. In fairness I should admit that these fulminations are directed rather against the disciples than the master. But I do not hold him altogether blameless. And I wish he would do what he was created for, which he yet may, instead of lamenting among the fallen temples of his spiritual Carthage. Scipio, it will be remembered, was partly responsible for the desolation of the city, whose ruin he regretted.

If I have reserves about Eliot, I have none about the two living gods of my idolatry. They are as different as a Hampshire glen and a New Hampshire "Notch." They hardly belong to the same species. But with characteristic irrationality I think of them together, nor could I get along well, if I lacked either. Such brief meetings as I have had with them are white stone moments.

It was about a year after Brooke first spoke to me about Walter de la Mare, that the scales fell from my eyes. Brooke had been almost violent in his praise of a man whose name

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I heard for the first time, and with human perverseness I had naturally crossed my fingers. I have noticed it again and again in myself and others, the tendency to resist the enthusiasm no matter how much you like the enthusiast. Also there seems to be in my case, and I fancy in others too, a sort of lag between the initial contact and the real taste of the thing. When I first read "The Listeners" I thought it a rather pretty, rather conventional poem with an unusual rhythm—no more. A year later when I glanced at it again, quite by accident, I wondered what could have been the matter with me. Every syllable of its dying falls was loaded with implications I had not seen or even dreamed. That music is as full of sunken cathedrals and gardens under the rain as Debussy himself. But it is also as nervously strong, for all its romantic airs, as poetry must be. I am awfully glad such elf-horns blew in my time, even if it did take me twelve stricken months to be roused by them. And to tell the man so was much to me, whatever it was to him. England shall bide till judgment-tide, so long as the son of Thomas the Rhymer knocks at the moonlit door.

There is something profoundly comic to me in my own sight that I sat on a Pulitzer jury which saw a book by Robert Frost and found it good. Robert Frost is the tree in our wood. He is the crag on our hill. He is there. We need not argue, though it appears that it ought to be done. Bernard De Voto and I do not dig with the same foot on many questions. But when he smote the heathen that had undertaken to tell Frost off, a combination of Beaumont and Fletcher and the Siamese Twins could not have been more of one mind than De Voto and I. Three scorpion sentences of De Voto's made every one of those criticasters hunt his hole. Their mere existence is pretty good evidence that there is no design in nature. No conscious mind would have created them intentionally.

Frost is not only the best poet in America. He is also the

wisest man. This is not an unsupported statement, such as comes easily to the lips of admiration. Others, exercised in matters unconnected with literature, have made the observation. Ample proof could be adduced. I saw the effects, curiously enough, at a dinner given in Frost's honor by the Poetry Society of America. Now that society, like other mutual insurance companies, isn't too terribly attractive. It is full of envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness, of egotisms under imperfect control, of peacock vanities, of factitious humilities. To a mob of the disappointed and self-conscious, Frost made a speech every word of which was *Dichtung* and *Wahrheit*. In the pretentious hotel ballroom that fancied it was in the manner of Versailles, there was such a silence as when an oration is pronounced at the funeral of a hero. All faces grew gentler, yet they were intent, too, and transfigured, as I have seen the faces of commonplace musicians at a great recital. Mr. Skylark's countenance had lost its look of spiritual esurience. And Miss Nightingale for the moment had forgotten both her gift of song and her taste in dress, each of which leaves something to be desired. Whatever was real in persons, who have, by the conditions of modern life, been especially compelled to act artificially, came to the surface and most attractively. One saw that they could be liked. The spell that Merlin wove was like nothing I had ever experienced, except once in Zürich when Jung rose up in a chariot of fire beyond the excellence to which he has accustomed us. And as if the wisdom were not enough, there was something as wild as a brook about the performance. It was the first and only time that I have seen three hundred people visibly troubled, when they perceived that the speaker of the evening was about to make an end.

I have praised the man. It is unnecessary to praise his poetry. I might as well praise Passaconaway and compliment Chocorua, ancient and noble hills, which are likely to remain, whatever may be said of them.

DEFENSE OF POETRY

I have lived for poetry and I have not been lonely having known others who lived on the same terms, some of them "no small ones," as Peroo said when he saw the gods arrive. Poetry, which to me is the greatest and most masculine of arts, has its ups and downs, its good times and bad. I don't think this time is anywhere near as bad as the disappointed and unfortunate are apt to make it out in bitter essays in the little magazines. After all great poetry has been written in the fifty years with which this book deals. "The Testament of Beauty" would in itself be enough to set up an era. But it wasn't alone. John Davidson, not enough read, was something, Francis Thompson still more. In our own country there have been noble and distinct voices.

But I do feel that two mild strictures apply, and, at the risk of being called an unredeemable foggy, I am going to state them. Certain poets, not always poor ones, seem now to prefer to write in an argot that only a clique can understand, if indeed the clique can understand. This is, to me, a sort of sin against the Holy Ghost. I do not demand that all poetry should be as clear as Pope, nor am I wholly an advocate of simplicity, Wordsworthian or other. Many things, proper material of the poet, are complex and difficult. But they are not made less so by the spiritual slang, the intellectual anacoluthon, the phony techniques, in favor among some talented men. These phenomena may be rich and strange, but so far the production of coral from those bones has been disappointingly slight in quantity and inferior in quality. That men of ability should run a-whoring after them is evidence of self-mistrust. Byron put it savagely over a century ago:

Good workmen never quarrel with their tools.

Another notion, loose in these times, depresses me a good deal. And I get small comfort from the fact that it is self-evidently false, because so many clever people believe it. It

is openly said by many, and apparently swallowed by more, that a man can't be a poet unless he believes in economic determinism or whatever. Alexander Blok, the Russian "Byron de nos jours," couldn't manage it and "was so anti-social as to kill himself." I understand his poetry continues to be read by the recalcitrant, who clearly ought to be purged. Of course in Germany a man can't be a poet, if he *does* believe in economic determinism. It all comes to the same thing. It would be hard for me to forgive a great poet his Fascism. But I don't believe I shall ever be put to the test. Such dogmas don't really get hold of the men likely to write great poetry. Juvenal survives not because he attacked a system which has disappeared, but because he was full of poetry that never can, which was wholly independent of his hates. Ribera's paintings, if they are to endure, will do so because they are art, not because they are propaganda. It is diverting to imagine the bewilderment of Karl Marx, whom I do myself the honor of admiring, if he could see to what use the faithful have put his doctrines. Marx's favorite reading was Surtees, whose stories of the immortal Jorrocks, he could hardly wait for, as they were issued serially week by week. Needless to state Surtees was the most crassly bourgeois writer of a bourgeois time. What would Marx have said of besotted doctrinaires who aim at dethroning Goethe, never quite close enough to the party line, yet by some human quirk the favorite author of Stalin? That is plenty on what is self-evident. I turn to what is less so, though apparent enough if you look about you.

I believe that beyond any peradventure a renaissance is gestating in this country. For some years I have read enormous numbers of books of verse submitted for the Pulitzer Prize. I am not much of an advocate of such prizes, but I try to follow the Sanskrit adage once quoted to me by Ryder: "Whatever foolish thing men think wise, a wise man, knowing it to be foolish, ought to do—for the public good." Be

DEFENSE OF POETRY

that as it may, the books tell one many things quite as important as what gets into reports of the Brookings Institute. Every caste and class has someone who lifts his voice. And what the speakers have to say is a damned sight better than the cynical are apt to believe, ever so much better than it would have been thirty years ago when I began to write. Some of it of course is perfectly awful. Nothing is much more terrible than a mediocre mind which has made the mistake of acquiring an *afflatus* and nothing else. But many volumes have some art and no little grace, including the sweet grace of modesty. A girl from the Panhandle writes of her plains with feeling and without any sentimentality whatever. The young radical speaks up for the exploited, and a damn good job too with noble lines. A Bar Harbor matron escapes from the complex and ridiculous into the simple and tragic. Jeffers' great "Wild Swan" sounds its note as if from celestial bronze. And Benét's city is really on fire. One has the feeling of something immense and preliminary. A musician would already be aware of the direction and necessary development of the symphony. I am sure it is coming. We shall have our spacious times, the eagles and the trumpets, and the multitudes shall not weep.

What we desired is beginning to be heard. In spite of stupidity and pursuing my own false gods, I have been on the trail of it thirty years. I believe, though I cannot say I have touched the wounds with my fingers. In the event that a humanly great thought should burn across my brain and incarnate itself in inevitable and indestructible words that came home to men's businesses and bosoms, I should be happy indeed, but only happier in degree than I have been, and still am, to be a part, no doubt inconspicuous, in a great effort to get people to seek true and essential pleasure. I may never think that thought or discover those words. But if you have had a better time than I have had trying, you've had a damned good one.

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